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the weekly Standard

DECEMBER 5, 2005

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Pete Hunt

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Contents

December 5, 2005 • Volume 11, Number 12

2 Scrapbook..... *Yaks, a local jihadist, Maya Plisetskaya.*

4 Casual..... *David Skinner, clubman.*

6 Correspondence..... *Bush, HARMONY, etc.*

9 Editorial..... *Alito, Then and Now*

Articles

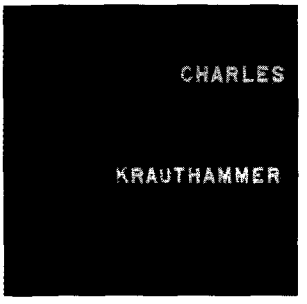
11 El Grande Old Party? *Bush's immigration offensive*..... BY FRED BARNES

12 Dis-United Kingdom *Multiculturalism isn't working.*..... BY LEO MCKINSTRY

15 Right Plan, Wrong State *The governor of Massachusetts takes a stab at health insurance reform.*..... BY ARNOLD KLING

17 The Ohio Players *DeWine could be vulnerable—but for now the Democrats are fighting each other.*..... BY ERIC PFEIFFER

18 Get Out Your Sweaters *The coming natural gas shock.*..... BY WILLIAM TUCKER



Features

21 The Truth about Torture

It's time to be honest about doing terrible things..... BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

26 Staying in Vegas

Seventy-five years ago, my family placed a bet on a small Nevada town... BY ALLISON R. HAYWARD

Books & Arts

33 Cyprus Betrayed *Another fine mess, courtesy of Kofi Annan's U.N.*..... BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

35 Hi, Ho! Steverino *Steve Allen was the man who owned midnight.*..... BY STEFAN KANFER

37 When in Rome *How Latin thrived, declined, and was revived*..... BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

38 'Picture' Perfect *Randall Jarrell's classic novel of academic life.*..... BY DAVID GUASPARI

41 Prelude to War *Did Texas statehood lead to southern secession?*..... BY WILLIAM MURCHISON

43 THE STANDARD READER ..... *James R. Hansen's life of Neil Armstrong.*

44 Parody ..... *The Stalin Wit.*

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Yakking It Up in Mongolia

It seemed to THE SCRAPBOOK that the first visit by a U.S. president to Mongolia got short shrift last week. So here are a couple of our favorite pictures from Air Force One's stopover in Ulan Bator. On the left the president and the first lady, walking with Mongolia's President Nambaryn Enkhbayar, approach a yak. On the right, the two presidents approach two camels. ♦

"I don't think that's a Texas longhorn, Laura."

AP Photo / Pablo Martinez Monsivais

A presidential motorcade?

Al Qaeda's Valedictorian

It took less than 72 hours for jurors in an Alexandria, Virginia, federal courthouse to convict 24-year-old Ahmed Omar Abu Ali—born in Houston, raised in the northern Virginia suburbs—on nine counts of membership in al Qaeda, conspiracy to commit terrorist acts, and conspiracy to assassinate President George W. Bush. The verdict was handed down last Tuesday, November 22, and sentencing—Abu Ali faces life imprisonment—is scheduled for February 17.

And how did America's premier news organizations react to the verdict, you ask? With a big, lazy yawn.

Don't get us wrong: Abu Ali's hometown paper, the *Washington Post*, found room on Wednesday's front page for Jerry Markon's 987-word piece reporting the conviction. And if you looked hard enough in that day's *New York Times*, you'd have been able to find, buried on page A20, David Stout's 821-word article on Abu Ali. But other than that . . . zilch, nada, zip.

Which left us scratching our head. Because just a few months ago all of America's premier news organizations couldn't say enough about the case. There was for example the March 7 *Time* story by Daniel Eisenberg—"Is prosecution [of the war on terror] getting too aggressive?"—which said Abu Ali had been brought up on "questionable charges." And there was the February 24 *New York Times* editorial pronouncing that the "case seems to be another demonstration of what has gone wrong in the federal war on terror." The kid just didn't seem like a terrorist. After all, Eisenberg wrote, "in many ways," Abu Ali "had a fairly typical American upbringing"—which is to say, he spent his youth "playing soccer, tutoring other kids, passionately cheering on the Washington Redskins and even dreaming of one day becoming President of the U.S."

And the kid is pretty darn smart, too—as countless talking heads and news articles pointed out when Abu Ali was extradited back to the United States from the Saudi jail in which he had been imprisoned since June 8, 2003. "A Virginia high school valedictorian is now accused of trying to assassinate President Bush and of helping al Qaeda," is how MSNBC host Dan Abrams put it. Indeed, reported CBS correspondent Jim Stewart, "the only thing that appears certain" in re *United States of America* v. *Ahmed Omar Abu Ali* is that the defendant "was one of the smartest students" in class, and "graduated valedictorian." A friend told AP: "He was very wise, very mature for his age."

Now, we're unsure why a high school valedictorian can't also be an international terrorist. And we're especially unsure of this, considering where Abu Ali went to high school: The Islamic Saudi Academy in Falls Church, Virginia. Last February, New York senator Charles Schumer asked the Justice Department to look into the funding and links to terrorism of the academy, the former comptroller of which, Ismael Selim Elbarasse, having been arrested

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in August 2004 for his ties to Hamas. Two years earlier, another alum, Mohammad Usman Idris, was charged with perjury before a grand jury in another terrorism case. Funded by the House of Saud, the school reportedly uses textbooks stating, among other things, that Christianity and Judaism are "false" religions.

"High school valedictorian." Sheesh. What did Abu Ali write his senior essay on? *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion?* ♦

My Oh Maya

Arnold Beichman, THE SCRAPBOOK's Palo Alto correspondent, writes from his perch at the Hoover Institution with a reminiscence, followed by a terrific idea:

"It was a beautiful spring evening in 1987 in Moscow," writes Arnold. "U.S. ambassador Jack Matlock was presiding over a reception at Spaso House, as the ambassador's residence is called. Butlers were circling the drawing rooms, balancing carved silvered trays on which champagne flutes were sparkling. Delicious Russian hors d'oeuvres—*zakuski*—were being speared off crowded platters. Mikhail Gorbachev had been the Soviet leader for only two years, and his intentions were clouded in mystery. Nobody really knew what *perestroika* and *glasnost* meant.

"I was small-talking with Matlock in a far corner of the drawing room about the meaning of Gorbachev's new policies, but I noticed his eye kept wandering to the entrance where stood his wife Rebecca. Matlock was behaving as if he were awaiting an epiphany. He was.

"Matlock had invited to the reception the celebrated Russian prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, a Jew by origin. Would Plisetskaya be allowed to attend the reception? Under Gorbachev's predecessors, Andropov and Chernenko, a U.S. Embassy invitation to Plisetskaya would have been regarded as, in Bolshevikese, a *provokatsia*, a provocation, and she would not have been sent. But Gorbachev was the new boy in the Kremlin, a protégé of Andropov, so let's see what he's made of.

"Suddenly, as if someone had pounded a gavel, conversation stopped. There she stood—Maya Plisetskaya, 60 years old at the time, Russia's world-renowned *première danseuse*. (She was born in Moscow on November 20, 1925, joined the Bolshoi Theatre in 1943, and danced there for half a century.)

"I remembered all this," Arnold continued, "when I read last week that Plisetskaya danced once more at the Bolshoi to celebrate her 80th birthday. Agence France-Presse described her as 'sensual and untamed.' But she is more than that. 'No other prima ballerina in the history of dance has succeeded in remaining the center of attention for 60 years,' according to Tatyana Kuznetsova, a ballet critic. As the AFP reporter correctly noted, she had a 'personality that neither her artistic detractors nor Soviet authorities succeeded in bridling.'

"French argot has a word for those of us, 30 years of age and over: *croulant*, from the verb, *crouler*, meaning 'to crumble.' Maya Plisetskaya ought to be invited over here by President and Mrs. Bush to do a little ballet at the White House as an inspiration for us *croulants*." ♦

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Casual

Virtuous Cycle

When I was a kid, my friends and I were always starting clubs. They all consisted of the same four or five guys, but membership was not automatic. To be accepted into the Phoenix Club or The Jets or The Time Travelers, you'd have to complete a rite of initiation. This might involve riding your bike off a precariously high ramp or shoplifting candy from the supermarket—shaving cream if Halloween was coming up—or smoking a whole cigarette by yourself.

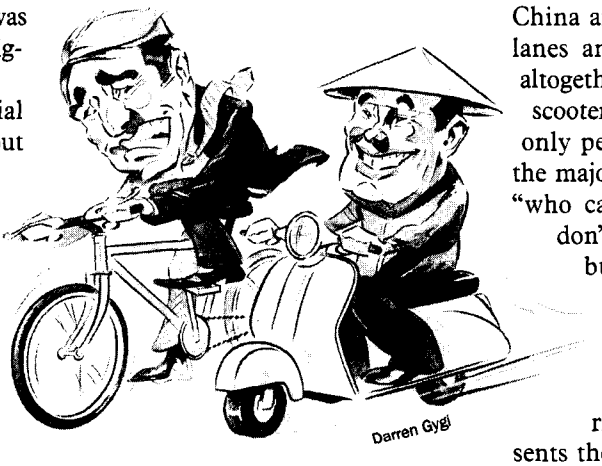
With the completion of this trial by fire, we'd pretty much forget about the club and do what we always did. We'd play stoopball or spud, or we'd ride bikes. I spent years rolling around the local neighborhoods on my no-brand department store dirtbike.

But around seventh or eighth grade, I became too cool for bikes. I'd walk instead. Even the mile-long trek to my friend Frank's house, to listen to Talking Heads albums, I'd make on foot. Walking suited the introverted and pretentious teenager I was becoming. To get to high school, I took buses and trains. These too I found agreeable since they allowed me to nod off—that is, when I was too tired to read the Camus novels in my backpack.

Travel-wise, at least, my teenage life seemed complete. So little did I care for other modes of transportation that I didn't bother to get a driver's license for several years after I became legally eligible.

This was eccentric behavior in my house. My two brothers were sneaking off with our parents' car keys long before they got their licenses. One summer, my older brother had a job driving an old construction guy around in his Cadillac to worksites all over Long Island. My mother made him quit—because he didn't even have a learner's permit.

Lately I've once again been getting around, except for long trips and certain household chores, without a car. Of course, I do have one, and I like to use it. For one thing, it's a great place to listen to music, but when I drive I rarely get to rock out as I would like to. From the passenger's seat, my wife watches me very closely lest I slip into the CD player one of those depressing hipster albums I'm *always* listening to.



What was my point? Yes, that I am driving less. Instead, I ride a bicycle—to work and elsewhere. One day last week I rode my bike across two state lines, from Virginia to the District in the morning and then into Maryland for a cocktail party in the evening. A path connects my suburban neighborhood to downtown, so to get to the office I have to mix it up with city traffic for only a few blocks.

I've upgraded from my old knobby wheeler to a Specialized Crossroads hybrid I call Ivan, after Ivan Illich, a forgotten '60s intellectual who admired bicycles for moving at a more humane speed than cars. Yes, my taste in books is as pretentious as ever, but Illich can be interesting to read. It is hard, though, to take him seriously when he nods approvingly at all that Mao is doing to improve China—you know, like starving tens of millions of people.

Then again, China was reliable on the old bicycle-versus-car debate. Until recently, anyway.

While American cities build more paths, and newspapers report that more people, like me, are biking to work, China—the land of the bicycle—is heading in the opposite direction. I wonder what Illich would say about this. Unfortunately he's dead. So I asked my friend, Marc Teillon, who lives in Shanghai.

Marc says that major cities in China are forcing bikes into special lanes and out of some downtowns altogether to give the right of way to scooters and, increasingly, cars. The only people who still ride bikes in the major cities, Marc says, are those "who can't afford to take a cab or don't have the time to wait for a bus. Odds are your average cyclist here is not doing it to help the environment or trying to lose weight."

Of course, in America, riding a bicycle to work represents the height of socially responsible behavior. But I'm no environmentalist, nor a fitness freak. And I confess it was not my intention to stick it to the oil cartels, though I am happy to do my tiny part on that score. There is, I should mention, one clear humanitarian benefit to what I'm doing. Staying out of automobile traffic has greatly reduced the number of times a day I think ill of my fellow man.

The main reason I ride a bike to work is that it's fun. It may even lead me to join some clubs. I recently read an article by a guy who's ridden all over the world, and, to acknowledge all the miles he's pedaled, a local bicycle association granted him its high-mile honor. He is now a member of the Order of the Cast-Iron Crotch.

David Skinner

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Correspondence

Return Fire

William Kristol praises the president for defending his administration in "Bush Fights Back" (Nov. 21), but it is too little, too late. The president and his advisers clearly failed to learn an important lesson of the Vietnam war, namely, that if the government gets involved in a hot war overseas, it must also wage a propaganda soft war at home against the anti-American left wing. Going back to just before the start of the Iraq war, one can compose a list of each assault in a series of propaganda attacks on the president, the administration, and the war effort. Each assault in the series lasted four to six weeks, and as soon as one theme lost traction it was replaced by another. By leaving all these attacks unanswered, the president is now suffering from their thousand cuts.

Samuel Alunni
Newton, Mass.

Ditto

In his illuminating "Where Are the Pentagon Papers?" (Nov. 21), Stephen F. Hayes describes his arduous yet failed attempts to obtain information that may help explain why it was important to attack Iraq. We learn that the Defense Intelligence Agency is studying thousands of captured Iraqi papers and filing them in a database called HARMONY. But after months of repeated freedom-of-information requests to the Pentagon, Army Intelligence, and DIA for a few unclassified documents in this database, Hayes found himself thoroughly (and illegally) stonewalled.

Hayes sees this stonewalling as a lost chance to let the press help vindicate the administration's rationale for war. In reality, it seems more likely to be just another example of the breathtaking incompetence of this administration. With the war effort collapsing on all sides, it seems that even answering a simple database request is beyond their ability. With a sort of "reverse Midas touch," almost any effort the Bush administration touches fails.

Carl Mezoff
Stamford, Conn.

Whoa, Man! Be Fair . . .

I very much would like to agree with Heather Mac Donald's premise in "God and (Wo)man at Yale" (Oct. 17);

however, I question her logic. She cites an example at Yale, where a photo on the cover of the alumni magazine featured chaplains of varying faiths and color, but no females. Feminists on campus were outraged, as they took this as a sign of female exclusion and patriarchy, Mac Donald says. Yet to what sources does she refer? *Two* female graduates, out of a school of over 5,000 students!

There are thousands of Christian fundamentalists whose views could be seen as similarly outrageous and irrational. Yet we do not discount the entire Christian faith on this premise. This, however, is what Mac Donald attempts to do regarding feminism. One does not cut down the whole tree simply because one of the branches is diseased. Similarly, Mac Donald should give more thought to the feminist movement as a whole, and the core beliefs upon which it is built, rather than to the views of two confused women.

Stephen Crispini
Mahwah, N.J.

Whipping the Post

It is curious that you chose Edward T. Folliard for the byline to your Nov. 21 Parody of the *Washington Post* ("Card, Rove Out; Gergen New Chief"). By an odd coincidence, the same night I read the Parody, I was also reading Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*, and there on page 710 was "Edward T. Folliard of the *Washington Post*, the most implacable of the pro-Hiss newspapers."

Oh, and of course the other article in the Parody was credited to Janet Cooke, the notorious *Post* reporter who fabricated a story about a fictitious eight-year-old heroin addict in 1980. Thanks for the memories!

Roger Clegg
Sterling, Va.

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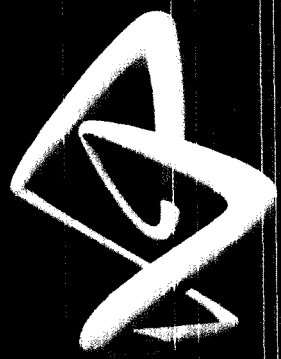

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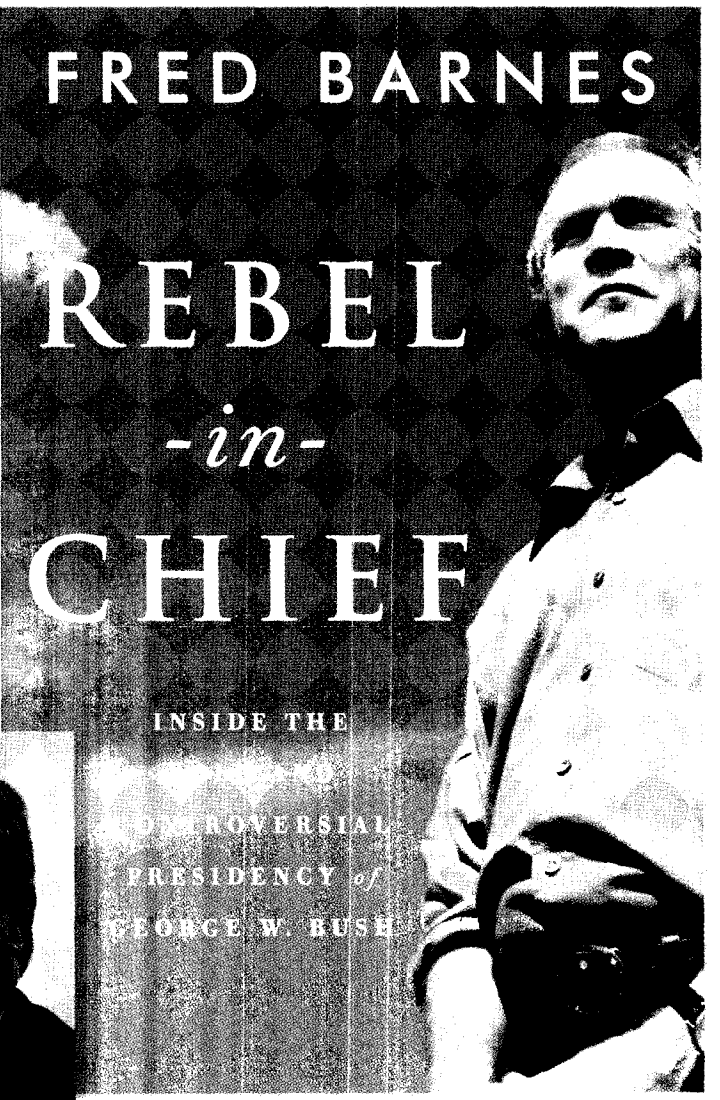

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Alito, Then and Now

The outlook for the Alito nomination remains favorable. Even so, there is this short essay Sam Alito wrote in 1985. Senate Democrats and their political and media allies don't like it. Indeed, they think it may provide kindling that will feed a flame that they can blow into a fire mighty enough to consume the nomination. Because the essay is likely to stimulate the toughest questions Alito will hear when he appears before the Judiciary Committee in January, it's worth a close look.

Twenty years ago Alito was wrapping up his fourth year briefing and arguing cases in the Supreme Court as an assistant to the solicitor general. He learned about an opening for a senior position in the Office of Legal Counsel and applied (successfully, as it turned out). The job was a political slot, meaning it was not intended for a career attorney, which Alito had been since joining the Justice Department in 1977. It is possible to move from the civil service to a politically appointed position, but the person making that transition typically must share and be willing to support the administration's policies. The form Alito filled out thus asked him to "provide any information . . . pertinent to your philosophical commitment to the policies of this administration." Another question asked whether the job candidate had ever served on a political committee or been identified publicly with any political organization or candidate or issue. To both questions Alito wrote, "Please see attached sheet," on which he had composed a brief essay.

It began: "I am and always have been a conservative and an adherent to the same philosophical views that I believe are central to this administration." He noted that when he "first became interested in government and politics during the 1960s, the greatest influences on my views were the writings of William F. Buckley, Jr., the *National Review*, and Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign." He described "in capsule form" his political views: "I believe very strongly in limited government, federalism, free enterprise, the supremacy of the elected branches of government, the need for a strong defense and effective law enforcement, and the legitimacy of a government role in protecting traditional values." Alito said that he was "a life-long registered Republican" and had made "modest political contributions" to Republicans in his state (New Jersey) running for office, among them Christopher Smith, James Courter, and Jeff Bell. He noted that he was a member of the Federalist Society and that he had submitted articles for publication to both *National Review* and the *American Spectator*.

As for legal matters, Alito wrote, "in college [Princeton, 1972], I developed a deep interest in constitutional law, motivated in large part by disagreement with Warren Court decisions, particularly in the areas of criminal procedure, the Establishment Clause, and reapportionment. I discovered the writings of Alexander Bickel advocating judicial restraint, and it was largely for this reason that I decided to go to Yale Law School [class of 1975]." He declared: "I disagree strenuously with the usurpation by the judiciary of decisionmaking authority that should be exercised by the branches of government responsible to the electorate." He observed that "the Administration has already made strides toward reversing this trend through its judicial appointments, litigation, and public debate," and he expressed hope that "even greater advances can be achieved during the second term, especially with Attorney General Meese's leadership." Alito emphasized that it had been "an honor and source of personal satisfaction" to serve in the solicitor general's office during the Reagan administration "and to help advance legal positions in which I personally believe very strongly." He cited "my contributions in recent cases in which the government has argued in the Supreme Court that racial and ethnic quotas should not be allowed and that the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion."

In the essay, Alito clearly was an advocate—in his own behalf. And the picture of himself that he presented to Meese and the White House office of presidential personnel was that of not merely a "life-long registered Republican" but a political conservative ("I am and always have been") and a legal conservative, someone who shared the administration's views and was proud to be serving under President Reagan. By his account, Alito traveled the same path many conservative intellectuals of his generation did, drawing inspiration (at the age of 14) from the Goldwater campaign, reading Buckley and *National Review*, even batting out articles he sent to *NR* and the *American Spectator*. And concerning the law, like so many legal conservatives of his generation, he found himself questioning decisions of the Warren Court and discovering the work of arguably its greatest critic, Alex Bickel, a Yale Law professor who died young, at age 49, a few months before Alito gained his J.D. from Yale. Like other critics of the Warren Court, includ-

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ing some liberals, Alito identified its problematic legacy—usurpation of authority that the Constitution commits to the elective branches of government. The classic example of such usurpation, of course, was the early Burger Court decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*, which, denying the elective branches the authority to determine abortion policy, mandated a pro-abortion rights regime. It was *Roe* that the Reagan administration, in a case that Alito worked on, asked the Court to overrule.

Senate Democrats almost certain to oppose Alito anyway are seizing upon his job-application essay to argue, in effect, that someone with his biography shouldn't be confirmed. Sen. Edward Kennedy has gone so far as to condemn Alito for having found something to like about the Goldwater campaign. Sen. Joseph Biden has declared that Alito's disagreement as a college student with the Warren Court's reapportionment decisions may constitute sufficient reason for a filibuster. Senator Patrick Leahy has complained that Alito was "an aggressive participant in an ideological movement"—meaning the conservative one headed up by Ronald Reagan. None of the Senate Democrats nor their allies have yet maintained that it was a crime for Alito to have read Buckley or Bickel or *NR* or to have tried to write for *NR* or *TAS* (we'd like to think THE WEEKLY STANDARD would have been favored with an Alito submission had we been around those many moons ago—and we would have accepted it, too); nor have they yet condemned Alito for his membership in a just-begun Federalist Society or his contributions to conservative Republican candidates. It is not too early, however, to make the obvious point that being a political conservative is hardly disqualifying for the Supreme Court. Nor is having worked as a political appointee at a high level in the Reagan Justice Department.

That said, Alito's essay presents questions the nominee must deal with: among them, whether he still takes issue with Warren Court decisions involving criminal procedure, the Establishment Clause, and reapportionment; whether he continues to regard racial and ethnic quotas as illegal; and, to be sure, whether he still thinks the Constitution doesn't protect a right to abortion. Alito will be asked such questions during his hearings, and already senators are posing some in private sessions with the nominee. According to second-hand accounts of those visits, Alito has adopted the strategy of playing down his essay by saying he was an advocate applying for a job then and that he has held a very different job, as a judge, for the past 15 years, and that in his years as a judge his legal views have changed some, such that he has "great respect for precedent." Of course it is true that judging is different from advocating, and you would expect a lower-court judge to develop a very high regard for Supreme Court precedents, since he is bound to follow them. But it remains the case that the views Alito stated in his 1985 essay were plainly, and proudly, his own, and for that reason they cannot so easily be set aside. The better strategy for Alito is the more credible one of straightforwardly discussing the substance of what he wrote.

On the Warren Court's criminal procedure cases that he disagreed with as a college student, for example, he could cite the difficulties the early critics (of varying political views) found in *Miranda* v. *Arizona* and *Mapp* v. *Ohio* (assuming they are the cases the young Alito found problematic) and indeed the Supreme Court's subsequent narrowing of their reach, without prejudging how he might decide cases brought under either precedent today. Likewise, again without declaring how he might rule in some hypothetical case, he could point to the doctrinal difficulties in Establishment-Clause jurisprudence that the Warren Court handed to the Burger Court, which then (in 1971) propounded the notorious "Lemon test," dissented from by no fewer than six Supreme Court justices over the past 30 years. On reapportionment, Alito is telling senators that he is committed to the "one-man, one-vote" principle elaborated in the line of cases begun with *Gray* v. *Sanders*. Here again, it strikes us that Alito need not shy from relating his view of the reapportionment cases when he first encountered them in the late 1960s, and we suspect that he found persuasive the famous dissents of Justice John Marshall Harlan.

On quotas, Alito could relate his involvement in *Wygant* v. *Jackson Board of Education* (1986) without crossing the line into how he would see a hypothetical challenge to preferences today. (On *Wygant*, by the way, let whoever so desires defend the quotas that the Supreme Court struck down in that case.) Finally, on abortion, Alito could describe his participation in the 1986 *Thornburgh* case and review the widespread criticisms of *Roe* (Justice Ginsburg herself was a critic) without saying how he would opine on a hypothetical challenge to *Roe* or to *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, in which the Court explicitly declined to overrule *Roe*.

Finally, Alito should be prepared for someone to ask whether he still is a political conservative, and how he feels today about his service in the Reagan Justice Department. Is it too obvious to state that conservatives will be annoyed if Alito says that he is no longer a conservative or proud to have worked for Reagan at Justice? That would be a confirmation conversion too horrible to contemplate. But we don't believe that Alito has changed his mind or has suddenly become timid. Again, being a political conservative is no disqualification for the High Court. And a conservative is what you'd expect to be named to the Court, if elections mean anything. At the same time, being able to distinguish between politics of whatever stripe and the law is what we rightly prize in a justice. This is where Alito's record on the bench is dispositive, for it demonstrates that in this important quality, he is an exemplary nominee.

—Terry Eastland, for the Editors

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El Grande Old Party?

Bush's immigration offensive.

BY FRED BARNES

When President Bush signed the Homeland Security Appropriations Act six weeks ago, he did it in the East Room of the White House in a glossy ceremony befitting an occasion of Republican unity. Which is what it was, right up to the moment when Bush started talking about illegal immigrants. "They want to provide for their families," he said sympathetically. "Family values do not stop at the Rio Grande River. People are coming to put food on the table." He went on to plug his proposal for a "guest worker" program to allow illegals, in the United States or abroad, to work here and even stay permanently. A number of Republicans at the event were furious. They want to secure America's southern border tightly. But Bush's ideas about turning unlawful immigrants into American citizens are anathema to them.

So the Republican rift on immigration endures. Ten days before the ceremony, 82 House Republicans had written the president, urging him to push for immigration legislation to beef up border security—but nothing more. Bush's comments at the signing ceremony amounted to a flat rejection of their appeal. Indeed, the president begins a public campaign this week to take on the entire immigration issue—the border, the need for foreign workers, the 11 million illegal immigrants already living here—all at once.

It's an ambitious undertaking, especially for a president suffering from a dip in popularity and influence. And there are many obstacles to success in the House and the Senate. Still, achieving comprehensive immigration reform is possible. Bush will need a few breaks and a few new allies. But the good news is that he has a strategy.

Imagine what finally dealing boldly with America's immigration problem could do. Slashing the number of border crossings by illegal immigrants would be only the first step. A guest worker program would provide a lawful way for illegals to work here, solving a job crisis for American business and potentially reducing the incentive for illegal entry. The most difficult part would be creating a path to citizenship for those who came to the United States illegally but before a cutoff date.

For Republicans, immigration reform could be a saving issue in the 2006 midterm election. With Social Security reform off the table for now, immigration is America's most urgent domestic problem. And if handled sensitively, it would not reverse the drift of Hispanic voters to the Republican party. Democrats, of course, may try to disrupt Bush's efforts, as they tried in 2003 when he won a Medicare prescription drug benefit. But since his ideas on immigration are close to theirs, they're more likely to go along.

Two decades ago, immigration reform failed, at least in blocking illegal immigration. It lacked a safety valve for illegals—a guest worker program—and its aftermath was marked by inadequate border security and lax enforcement of the law barring employers from hiring illegals.

To succeed this time, Bush and his congressional allies will have to pull off an unlikely three-cushion shot and overcome several challenges along the way. The president will have to exert public and private pressure. Two Republicans will have to step up as leaders—Senator John Cornyn of Texas and James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. And the entire effort will have to be carried out in the politically safe context of tightening America's southern border.

The easiest part will come this year as the House passes a tough border security measure with the president's support. That's the first cushion. The bill will call for the erection of a wall in urban areas (as is already the case in San Diego), the planting of sensors and barriers in other areas, more border guards, additional detention facilities, and other steps.

Things get trickier at the second cushion—the Senate in 2006. Majority Leader Bill Frist advocates a "build out" on top of border security. This would mean adding a guest worker program and addressing the issue of illegal immigrants living in the United States. Frist is wary of relying on Democratic votes. His minimum requirement is that a majority of Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee vote for the measures.

This makes Cornyn an important player. Elected in 2002, he emerged quickly as an influential senator and leader of conservative Republicans with close ties to the president. And as a native of San Antonio, he has a deep interest in immigration. But to become the pivotal senator on immigration, he will have to back a compromise and persuade other conservative senators to follow his lead. At the moment, Cornyn supports the requirement that guest workers return home after their work is finished. Bush, Republicans such as Senator John McCain of Arizona, and most Democrats oppose that. They would give workers the right to stay and seek citizenship. And their support is crucial to ultimate passage.

Dealing with the fate of the 11 million illegals currently residing in the

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

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United States is even more difficult. The Senate initially must decide to include them in the immigration bill. Then, senators must reach agreement on a cutoff date, after which illegal immigrants will not be eligible for citizenship. Finally, they must choose the tests—such as employment, fluency in English, a willingness to be fingerprinted, and payment of back taxes—that illegals seeking citizenship must pass. Here again, Cornyn could be the key figure.

Once a comprehensive immigration bill clears the Senate, it reaches the third cushion in the House. At this point, Sensenbrenner becomes important. For reform to succeed, he will have to go along with a full-scale immigration bill, and then, after it's approved by the conference, support it aggressively. Speaker Denny Hastert is said to favor the comprehensive approach, a boon to final House passage. But he isn't likely to proceed unless a majority of House Republicans back the bill.

Throughout the process, the president will have to be prominently involved. His clout on Capitol Hill may be diminished, but it's far from nonexistent. In particular, he has to steer Republicans away from adding two provisions that would anger Hispanic Americans and endanger their inclination to vote Republican. One egregious scheme would be to try to repeal birthright citizenship. The other would be to unleash state and local police to hunt for illegals in Hispanic neighborhoods.

Might all this turn out to be a fantasy, nothing more than presidential or Republican self-delusion? Could be. The odds on achieving total immigration reform next year are not great. Given that, the White House is ready to accept a border security bill alone in 2006 and seek a guest worker program and a citizenship plan for illegal immigrants in 2007. But that would deprive the measure of the cover of enhancing border security and make passage all the more difficult. So it's not now or never for real immigration reform, just now or *maybe* never. ♦

Dis-United Kingdom

Multiculturalism isn't working.

BY LEO MCKINSTRY

London

CONDESCENDING superiority is a common British attitude towards the French, whose Gallic bureaucracy, artistic pretensions, and recent military record all serve as targets of ridicule. Now the recent wave of rioting across France, largely perpetrated by Muslim youths, has offered new scope to this smugness. Since the conflict began, the British media have been full of sneers about racial problems in French society, which supposedly has been far less successful than Britain in integrating migrant communities.

But this complacency could hardly be less justified. As an Irish-born writer who lives in both France and the United Kingdom, I believe that the British approach to race relations has been disastrous, fostering disunity, tension, and ethnic strife on a much greater scale than anything that has occurred in France. While cars have been torched in large numbers in French cities, Britain has experienced murderous terrorist outrages committed by Muslim men who were born and bred in England. Thankfully, there was only one fatality in the French disturbances. In the London bombings in July, 52 people were killed and over 700 injured.

Nor has Britain been free of serious race riots. Just before the trouble began in Paris, there were several nights of street fighting between Asian and African-Caribbean gangs in Birmingham, England's second largest city. Two people were killed. And this incident followed years of racial unrest in decaying industrial towns in the north of England, such as Burnley and Bradford, where there are large, radicalized Muslim populations, though the level of disorder is always downplayed by the political establishment and media, anxious not to undermine carefully manufactured images of multiethnic harmony.

In truth, Britain is now a deeply divided land, where suspicion, intolerance, and aggression cast their shadow over urban areas. Only the other day, the government revealed that, in the last twelve months, the number of prosecutions for racial hate crimes had risen by 30 percent. In a courageous recent speech, Trevor Phillips, a black broadcaster who now serves as the chairman of Britain's Commission for Racial Equality, warned that the country is "sleepwalking towards segregation," with society ever more fragmented by ethnicity and religion. Using remarkably frank language, Phillips added that parts of some cities will soon be "black holes into which no one goes without fear."

This sorry situation has been created by a deliberate act of public policy. For the last three decades, in response to waves of mass immigration, the civic institutions of Britain have eagerly implemented the ideology of multiculturalism. Instead of promoting a cohesive British identity, they have encouraged immigrant communities to cling to the customs, traditions, and language of their countries of origin. The emphasis is on upholding ethnic and cultural differences rather than achieving assimilation. This is in stark contrast to France,

Leo McKinstry writes regularly for the Daily Mail, Sunday Telegraph, *and* Spectator. *His biography of Lord Rosebery was published in Britain earlier this year.*

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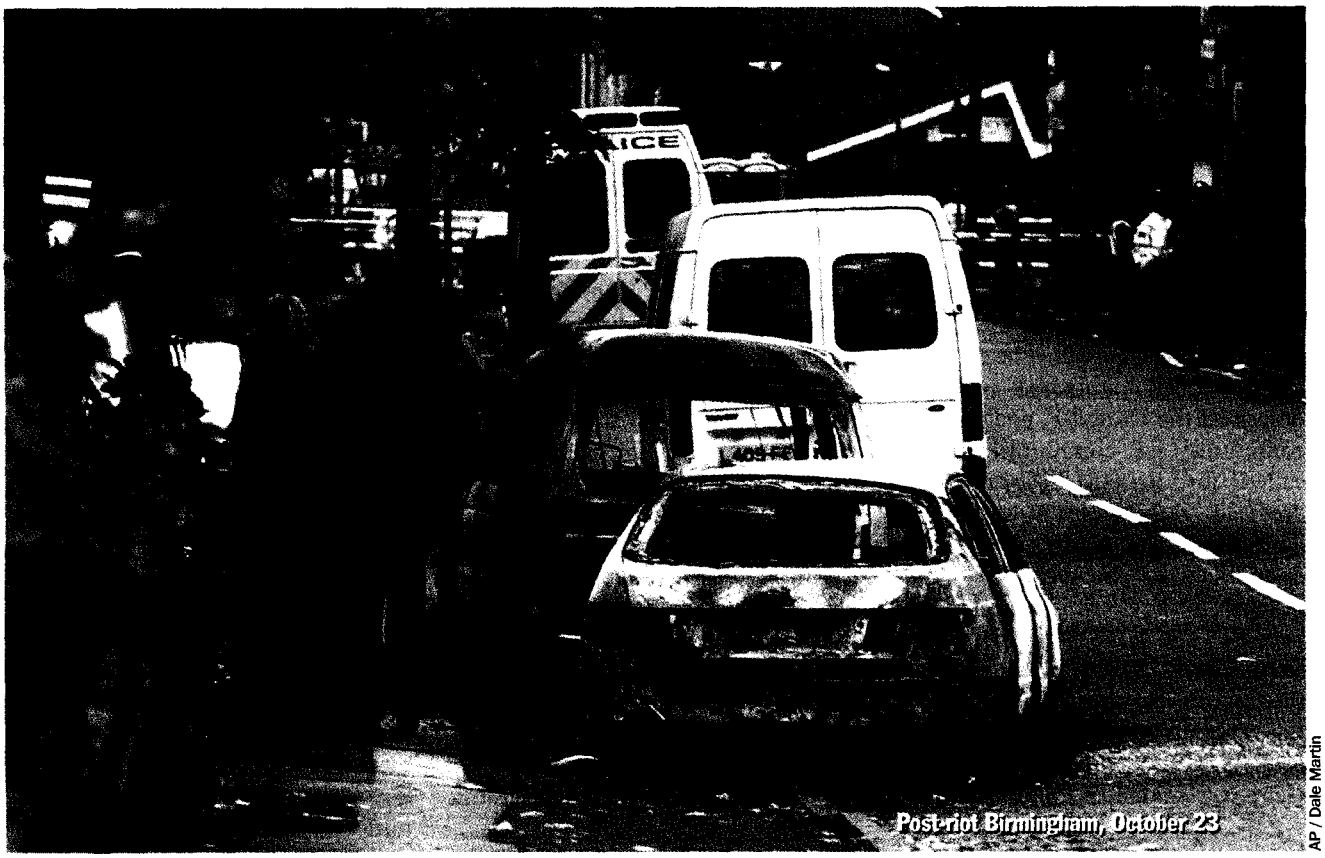

Post-riot Birmingham, October 23

AP / Dale Martin

which has taken a color-blind approach to immigration, with newcomers expected to adapt to the culture of the host nation. The recently imposed ban on Muslim girls' wearing the hijab or headscarf in schools is a classic example of the French model.

Britain has moved in exactly the opposite direction. Soon after the French hijab ban was implemented, a British Muslim teenager brought a successful legal action to win the right to wear in school full Islamic dress from head to toe. She was represented in her court case by Cherie Blair, the barrister wife of the prime minister. And Mrs. Blair's action was typical of the spirit of the Labour-led British ruling class, which has elevated dogmatic multiculturalism into a principle of governance.

Racial segregation is woven into the fabric of British public services. Indeed, under the latest race relations legislation, all public authorities have a statutory duty to promote cultural diversity. So inner city local councils and hospitals in urban areas now print all their public documentation in ethnic minority languages, including Kosovan, Hindi, Greek, Swahili, and Turkish, while many provide extensive interpreting services. One doctor who works in east London told me of her outrage at being sent to take a course in Bengali so she could communicate more effectively with her patients.

Bilingualism is common in urban schools, given that almost 12 percent of children have a first language other than English. London is now the most linguistically diverse city in the world, with more than 300 languages spoken by pupils, ranging from Punjabi and Nigerian Yoruba to Polish and Tamil. In addition, the government now provides funds to Muslims to set up their own schools, in which there is a predominantly Islamic ethos, imams are involved in teaching, and Arabic is learned for the study of the Koran. At present there are just five such Muslim state schools, but the government has announced plans to take the number to 150, a move that smacks of appeasement towards Islamic separatism. The police have also been infected with this spirit. In recruitment in London, there is an open bias towards applicants who speak "a community language." And in the Midlands city of Nottingham, the July bombings prompted the chief constable to order his officers to wear green ribbons "to show their solidarity with the Muslim community."

Thanks to multiculturalism, the provision of public housing, the arts, broadcasting, and community grants is now divided on racial lines. The BBC, the main state broadcaster, has its own Asian network providing news and features inside the U.K. in Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, and Gujarati. There are now more than 140 housing associations in England catering to ethnic minorities; one of them, the Aashyana in Bristol, provides special apartments for Muslims with the toilets facing away from Mecca. More than 10 percent of the bodies funded by the Arts Council, such as theaters and dance companies, describe themselves as black or Asian organizations. "British culture is not a single entity. We should

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rightly speak of British cultures," says the Arts Council.

Yet the diversity enthusiasts want to celebrate every culture but their own. In the self-flagellating climate of modern Britain, the nation's traditions are increasingly regarded as reactionary and prejudiced. Britishness has "systematic, largely unspoken racial connotations," declared the government's Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. The commission's report, published in 2000, described the United Kingdom as "a community of communities" and called for British history to be "revised, rethought or jettisoned." The official mood of self-loathing, epitomized by the terror of giving offense to any ethnic group, has become even more pervasive in the last five years. In one typical instance, the English inspector of prisons stated that wardens should not wear badges or tie pins with the red cross of St. George, England's national flag, because this could be "misinterpreted as a racist symbol."

Another extreme episode that was much discussed in the media five years ago illustrates how multiculturalism can undermine the management of social services. At Haringey Council in north London in February 2000, an 8-year-old child from Ivory Coast, Victoria Climbie, died after suffering a catalogue of cruelty, beatings, and neglect by her great-aunt, Marie-Thérèse Kouao, who claimed that Victoria was possessed by the devil. Social workers and the police, alerted repeatedly to Victoria's plight, were reluctant to intervene because they did not want to appear culturally insensitive to Kouao's beliefs or methods of discipline. Indeed, the prevailing mood in the Haringey social work office was one of perverted antiracism, where the woefully incompetent casework manager, Carole Baptiste, held meetings in the dark to discuss African witchcraft and spent much of her time talking about oppression of black women. "It is hard to say how mad it was," recalled one black social worker. "There were some black staff members who would not speak to white people. Aggressive racial politics permeated the office."

The English patriot and maverick socialist George Orwell wrote in 1941, "England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their nationality. In left-wing circles, it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman and that it is a duty to snigger at every English institution." More than 60 years later, multiculturalism has provided the ideal vehicle for the left, which now predominates in civic Britain, to exercise its destructive influence. The neurotic official obsession with the politics of racial identity has destroyed any shared sense of national belonging. As the Asian writer Kenan Malik has put it, "The problem is not that ethnic minorities are alienated from a concept of Britishness but that there is today no source of Britishness from which anyone—black or white—can draw inspiration."

Britain is fast replacing nationhood with a hierarchy of victimhood, with different ethnic groups living in conflict, each trumpeting its own sense of grievance. Age-old liberties, like freedom of speech, are disappearing; a play in Birmingham was recently closed down because a mob of Sikhs threatened to destroy the theater, claiming to be offended by the content of the production. Meanwhile, the endless British accommodation of Islamic extremism, in the name of racial tolerance, has allowed terrorism to flourish in our midst. According to one recent survey, 13 percent of British Muslims support home-grown terrorism, a terrifying thought given that there are 1.6 million Muslims in Britain.

Multiculturalism is not the road that France should go down. Bomb-scarred Britain proves that integration is not achieved by exacerbating racial division and institutional self-hatred. ♦

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Right Plan, Wrong State

The governor of Massachusetts takes a stab at health insurance reform. BY ARNOLD KLING

MASSACHUSETTS is considering health insurance reform to address the problems of the uninsured. The federal government is pressuring the state to do something or lose several hundred million dollars in Medicaid funding. Two competing ideas are single-payer health care, favored by some on the left, and a multilayered insurance reform proposed by Republican governor Mitt Romney.

Single-payer means that the state government would provide health insurance to all citizens. Single-payer appeals to those who oppose private enterprise in general and private health insurance in particular. It is an article of faith on the left that a state monopoly on health insurance would reduce private-sector inefficiency by eliminating duplicate overhead and doing away with profits. Those on the left believe so strongly in the efficiency of government-provided insurance that they think single-payer would reduce premiums paid by consumers and businesses by more than enough to offset any increase in taxes.

Romney's plan instead would deal with the state's estimated 460,000 uninsured without tearing down the existing insurance system. In fact, parts of the reform package are designed to make it easier for employers to provide health insurance by reducing regulatory mandates for coverage. Other reforms are intended to ensure that workers retain health insurance when they lose or change jobs.

Arnold Kling, an economist and contributing editor to Tech Central Station, *is author of a forthcoming book on health care policy,* A Crisis of Abundance.

More dramatically, the Romney plan does not take a one-size-fits-all approach to the uninsured. After all, there are three gaps that account for the uninsured population in Massachusetts today:

- About 110,000 people who are below the poverty line and are eligible for Medicaid but not enrolled;
- About 150,000 people with incomes up to three times the level of the poverty line ("near poor"), meaning that they still cannot afford coverage without assistance;
- About 200,000 people with incomes at least three times the level of the poverty line, who choose to self-insure, meaning that they do not purchase health insurance.

The poor would be enrolled in Medicaid. The challenge for Massachusetts, as for all states, is that many poor people know that they will receive free medical care without enrolling in Medicaid, simply by showing up at the emergency room. Romney's plan would change this by enrolling eligible recipients whenever they obtain medical care, while abolishing state programs that support free medical care for the uninsured.

The near poor would be provided with Safety Net Care—a means-tested subsidy to purchase private health insurance. For example, a single person with an income of roughly $24,000 would pay just under $1,000 a year for coverage. The total cost of the policy is envisioned to be about $4,000, so the taxpayers of Massachusetts would pay about $3,000 a year in subsidy payments for this individual. Someone with lower income would receive a higher subsidy and pay less, and someone with higher income would receive a lower subsidy and pay more.

Those who self-insure could continue do so only if they posted a $10,000 bond in case they needed medical care. The bond guarantees that if they get sick, they will in fact pay for their own health care rather than "free ride."

To encourage the recalcitrant to purchase health insurance, the Romney plan envisions private insurance with somewhat higher deductibles than are common today. One briefing for the Romney plan suggests that deductibles should be in the $250 to $1,000 range, rather than no deductible, which the briefing implies is the standard currently.

The Romney plan seems designed to solve a problem of uninsured consumers "free riding" by obtaining health care services without paying for them. The "free riders" leave the tab to be picked up either by state programs or by health care providers padding the bills of the insured. I have not seen data on how much "free riding" costs the taxpayers of Massachusetts, but in other states the figures are not large as a percentage of total health care spending.

Another problem that concerns many people is the cost of health insurance. People on the left blame this on insurance companies. However, the dollars absorbed by insurance company overhead are only about 6 or 7 percent of total health care costs.

Health insurance is expensive for two reasons. The main reason is that we consume a very expensive mix of health care services. This "premium medicine" consists of specialists and advanced technology. For example, since 1975, while the U.S. population has increased by only 35 percent, the number of gastroenterologists has risen by 433 percent, the number of pulmonary specialists by 472 percent, and the number of diagnostic radiologists by 704 percent. Since 1980, the number of CAT scans per year has risen from 3.6 million to over 50 mil-

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lion, and the number of MRI exams per year has risen from 0 to about 25 million.

Is premium medicine worth paying for? It is hard to say. Today, if you were to see a doctor after you hurt your back moving furniture, whether you got sent for an MRI would likely depend on whether you had insurance. Is the uninsured patient missing out, or is the insured patient getting an unnecessary procedure? If we knew the answer to such questions, then we would know whether our health care system is the best in the world or whether it is simply the most profligate.

The other reason that health insurance is expensive is that it is not really insurance. Instead, it acts more like a prepaid health plan, which insulates consumers against even low or moderate health care expenses. Real insurance would pay for expenses that were unusually large, rather than reimburse providers procedure by procedure.

The potential for real health insurance is based on the fact that 5 percent of the population incurs 50 percent of health care costs. In theory, all insurance reimbursements could go to the sickest 5 percent, so that in a typical year 95 percent of consumers would pay premiums but not make any claims. That is how other insurance markets work. However, the cutoff for being in that top 5 percent is over $10,000 a year in medical bills. Hardly any health insurance policies today offer deductibles as high as $10,000.

Romney's plan, with its deductibles of $1,000 or less, is not even close to real health insurance. Most people on his plan will meet the deductible. In the United States, average spending per person on health care is over $5,000, and in Massachusetts the average is over $6,000. Instead of a catastrophic deductible that will be met by 5 percent of the population, Romney is proposing a deductible that will be met by over 50 percent of the population. That is not going to produce affordable health insurance. Instead, it seems likely that health insurance companies will find it uneconomical to offer insurance with the combination of premiums and deductibles envisioned in the governor's plan.

Realistic market-oriented reform would have to push deductibles much higher, in order to provide true catastrophic health insurance. However, high deductibles would be a much tougher sell politically.

Romney's approach is commendable insofar as it advances the principle that health insurance should be a personal responsibility rather than an entitlement. However, it does not do enough to steer the uninsured toward real health insurance.

Moreover, if I were going to pick a state in which to attempt an experimental health care financing reform, it would not be Massachusetts. Massachusetts, with its outstanding medical schools and world-class hospitals, is rich in the suppliers of premium medicine, and abundant supply has been shown to drive up usage.

Health care is often debated under the mistaken assumption that the high cost of health insurance and the rising number of uninsured reflect a market failure in health insurance per se. Instead, the disarray in health insurance is due to premium medicine, which is more entrenched in Massachusetts than in other states.

Any experiment in health insurance in Massachusetts is more than likely to fail. Because of the prevalence of premium medicine, Massachusetts is almost certain to rank near the top of states in terms of health care spending while not showing measurable differences in health care outcomes. Other states will observe the results in Massachusetts and say, "Whatever we do, let's not do *that*."

If the experiment in Massachusetts is labeled "market-oriented," then failure will boost the prospects for single-payer, and vice versa. Given the Bay State's prognosis, those of us who favor market-oriented health policy prescriptions might prefer to have Massachusetts go the single-payer route. ♦

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The Ohio Players

DeWine could be vulnerable—but for now the Democrats are fighting each other. BY ERIC PFEIFFER

IN OHIO, the Democrats' prospects for 2006 may be worse than the Republicans'. And that's saying something, given the magnitude of the GOP's problems in the state.

The Republican governor is the scandal-plagued Bob Taft, whose approval rating is below 20 percent, and each of Ohio's two Republican senators has recently strained his relations with the conservative base. George Voinovich blocked the Senate confirmation of John Bolton, forcing a recess appointment; and Mike DeWine joined the Gang of 14, the bipartisan group of senators who entered into an agreement to break the impasse over the filibustering of judicial nominees. Adding to conservative woes, Republican Jean Schmidt eked out only a narrow victory in the special election in the Second Congressional District last August, a seat that is normally safe for the GOP.

DeWine, who is up for reelection next year, expects a tough race. A recent Rasmussen Reports poll showed him trailing antiwar Iraq veteran Paul Hackett—the same Democrat who nearly defeated Schmidt—42 percent to 41 percent. But the Democrats' disunity may save the incumbent. Although Hackett began campaigning for the Senate almost immediately after the special election, he isn't a shoo-in for the Democratic nomination. He's facing an uphill primary battle against Rep. Sherrod Brown, who initially had promised Hackett he would stay out of the race.

Hackett is the first Iraq war veteran to seek national office. He favors a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops but says he does not regret his decision to serve. This makes him a powerful symbol for Democrats who oppose the war but want to appear strong on national security. He is also a member of the NRA, disagreeing with most of his party on Second Amendment issues. As for social issues, in an interview with *Salon*, Hackett modified a Bill Clinton phrase to sum up his views on abortion: "Until education eliminates it, it must remain safe, legal, and rare." At the same time, he favors gay marriage, and in the same interview he said of social conservatives, "They've got more in common with Osama bin Laden than I've got with them."

Sherrod Brown is a more conventional liberal. According to the *Almanac of American Politics*, his ratings on economic, social, and foreign policy issues place him somewhat to the left of fellow Ohio congressman Dennis Kucinich. In the last Congress, Brown voted against funding the Iraq war, against a ban on same-sex marriage, against a ban on partial-birth abortion, and against a ban on human cloning.

Anyone campaigning against Brown could conceivably accuse him of being a liar and a thief: He broke his promise not to challenge Hackett, and last month Brown confessed to plagiarizing from a blogger in a letter he sent to the Senate. The previous month some fellow Democrats had accused Brown of employing campaign operatives who engaged in ethically questionable use of campaign funds.

Ohio Democratic activist and blogger Tim Russo is one who has made this charge. Brown employs as a full-time campaign consultant Jerome Armstrong, founder of the popular leftist blog MyDD and a close associate of Markos Moulitsas, operator of another leading leftist blog, Daily Kos. Russo accuses Armstrong of profiting from his position on Brown's staff by using campaign dollars to purchase campaign ads on his own website. In a phone interview Russo says, "The connection is almost incestuous. Sherrod Brown enters the race and suddenly drops all this cash on a blog campaign."

Armstrong has since taken leave of MyDD. But Russo still isn't happy. He says Armstrong is taking his leftist agenda from the blogosphere into Ohio. "They get away with things financially that are unbelievable," says Russo. "When they bring that stuff into my state, where they can't vote in the primary, I have a problem with that."

A neutral observer, William Beutler, who covers blogs for the *National Journal*'s *Hotline*, says Armstrong's role is suspicious, but clear evidence of unethical activity is lacking. As Beutler puts it, "There was a concern that Armstrong was making money off the blogads he bought on behalf of Brown, but my reporting didn't support that. What profit there is goes to his co-bloggers. He sits on the board of BlogPAC with Moulitsas, but it seems almost entirely dormant."

Other Ohio Democrats had another problem with Brown's Internet ad campaign. In late October, Brown made a four-week online ad buy. The ad featured a smiling Brown and a link to "an open letter to the blogosphere" hinting at a Brown Senate run. A few days later, however, the ad changed. A picture of Hackett was digitally inserted, creating the image of a grinning Hackett facing Brown, who continued to look ahead—as if Brown were the candidate and Hackett a supporter. A new link directed readers to an ACT Blue fundraising site that promised to forward contributions to the eventual Democratic nominee.

Beutler credits Armstrong for eventually disassociating himself from the ad campaign, but says Armstrong may still cost Brown some Ohio voters. Russo is one. "Right now I'm leaning undecided because I don't like how Sherrod Brown is playing ball," he says. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have

Eric Pfeiffer reports for National Review Online.

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given Paul Hackett a second thought."

Mike DeWine's reelection is far from certain. Taft and President Bush's low approval ratings may be dragging down his numbers. Nonetheless, developments may continue to work in his favor. While DeWine initially angered some conservatives by joining the Gang of 14, the fallout of that episode appears more detrimental to the left. John Roberts sailed through his Senate confirmation to the Supreme Court, and Samuel Alito appears to have a solid footing as well. As National Republican Senatorial Committee spokesman Dan Ronayne said in a phone interview, "With the Gang of 14, Democrats lost a necessary tool in their plans for 2006. Now, it looks like Democrats have their own problems to sort out. We think Mike DeWine is in a good position for reelection."

Still unclear is whether DeWine will find himself running against an actual Iraq war veteran or a congressional Democrat who refused to fund that war. ♦

Get Out Your Sweaters

The coming natural gas shock.

BY WILLIAM TUCKER

PRESIDENT BUSH may have been blamed unfairly for the hurricane that hit New Orleans, but there isn't going to be anywhere to hide when the next "natural" disaster hits—the Natural Gas Shock of 2005-06. Natural gas is now selling at $12 per thousand cubic feet, up from $2 in 2002. But that's just the beginning. The industry has not fully recovered from the hurricane damage to its Gulf Coast facilities. This winter, as supplies tighten with the cold, the price could soar far higher.

The effects will be unevenly distributed. Homeowners will pay more —perhaps twice as much as last year, depending on the weather. Electric rates may go higher. But the real impact is going to be felt in the industrial sector, where devastating layoffs are already occurring. "We need to declare a national crisis," says Andrew Liveris, CEO of Dow Chemical, which is moving the "center of gravity" of its manufacturing base to Europe and the Middle East, where gas is more plentiful. "Dozens of plants around the country have closed their doors and gone away, and are never coming back."

Alan Greenspan has been warning about our failed and fouled energy policy for years, but no one has paid much attention. Least attentive of all are congressional Republicans who—in an act of near dementia—pulled a provision for opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for gas exploration out of a 2005 House budget bill. They may want to change their minds by next February.

Our natural gas production peaked in 2001, just as our oil production peaked in 1970. It probably isn't going back up. Sure, some new discoveries offshore and in Alaska may slow the decline—just as opening Prudhoe Bay slowed the drop in U.S. oil production during the 1980s. But in terms of domestic production of oil and gas, we're probably over the hill. Imports from Canada have picked up the slack since the late 1990s, but Canadian production has also peaked.

As happened with oil, we're going to be relying on the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America. Unfortunately, gas isn't as easy to import as oil. It must first be liquefied at minus 260° F, transported in special tankers (each carrying the energy of a small hydrogen bomb), then offloaded at special liquid natural gas terminals. The United States has four such ports, with 16 more on the drawing board, but environmentalists and local opponents are blocking them at every turn. The ability of federal authorities to override these state and local objections is another provision timorous Republicans just ripped out of the energy bill.

So natural gas is going to be in short supply for a long, long time. The bleeding in the economy won't end soon. It's part of a pattern you might call the "gentrification of America." Think of a quaint 19th-century factory town that upscale people from a neighboring city have just discovered for its charming old homes. But they don't like living

William Tucker is a contributing editor to the American Enterprise.

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amid the smells and clutter of the remaining industries, and once they control the town council, they start passing zoning and antipollution laws that drive those industries away. The brick factories are soon reclaimed as coffee shops and headquarters for clean, quiet software firms, while the dirty old industries—and their jobs—go "somewhere else." That's what's happening to America right now.

The fatal turn took place in 1979 when the country abandoned nuclear power as the result of Three Mile Island. At the time, the only real possibilities for powering our electrical plants were coal and nuclear. Coal was dirty, but environmentalists convinced themselves that it was a "bridge" to a solar future a generation or two down the road. They could live with it. "Clean coal" became the fuel of choice, while nuclear was consigned to outer darkness.

Then came acid rain. That led to sulfur scrubbers—which still clean only 40 percent of the nation's coal. Next came global warming. That wasn't even a "pollutant" but the inevitable byproduct of burning a billion tons of coal a year (up from 600 million in 1976). By the early 1990s, the solar future wasn't getting any closer, and the coal bridge was getting longer and longer. So environmentalists turned to natural gas.

In 1979, natural gas hadn't been on the table. Distorted for 30 years by federal price controls, the gas market was in complete chaos. A natural gas "shortage" during the winter of 1976-1977 had caused factory and school closings all over the Midwest. Sorting through the mess, newly elected President Jimmy Carter was appalled to discover that Texas was burning gas to generate 60 percent of its electricity while gas supplies were being rationed in Michigan. Faced with punitive price controls, the Texas Railroad Commission had decided to keep its gas at home.

The outcome was the Power Plant and Industrial Fuel Use Act of 1978, which *banned* natural gas in utility boilers. Gas was too precious a resource to be wasted on electricity. At the same time, Congress declined to extend natural gas price controls in the 1978 Natural Gas Policy Act, but did stretch them out for about a decade.

President Reagan did his best to accelerate price decontrol, and finally achieved it in 1987. Predictably, production rose steadily from 16.1 trillion cubic feet in 1986 to 19.6 in 2001—although it never regained the all-time peak of 21.7 in 1973. Eyeing this growing supply, environmentalists decided they had the answer to acid rain and global warming—substituting natural gas for coal.

Since 1992, more than 70 percent of the new utility boilers built in the United States have burned natural gas. The percentage of gas going to electricity has risen from 14 percent in 1988 (there were a few grandfathered plants) to 25 percent today. The use of gas for electricity has now surpassed residential consumption and is rapidly closing in on industrial use, which has declined 13 percent since 1997.

The rising demand for gas by power plants has decimated whole sectors of manufacturing, which use natural gas as a feedstock as well as a fuel. The fertilizer industry has been gutted.

The rising demand for gas by power plants has decimated whole sectors of manufacturing, which use natural gas as a feedstock as well as a fuel. The fertilizer industry has been gutted, with more than half the manufacturing plants leaving the country. The American Chemistry Council estimates 100,000 job losses since 2000 due to increasing gas prices. Dow alone has shuttered 23 plants. Every kind of plastics manufacturing is affected. Simmons Bedding cannot obtain polyurethane for its mattresses. Goodyear has cut U.S. tire production 30 percent. Rescue workers in New Orleans couldn't get water to hurricane victims because of a shortage, not of water, but of water *bottles*. The 1.2 percent jump in consumer prices in September—the biggest increase in 25 years—is almost certainly the result of higher gas prices rampaging through American industry.

"But isn't this just the free market at work?" you might ask. "If burning gas for electricity is more efficient, shouldn't we just do it?"

There are several reasons this is not true. First, electric rates in most states are still regulated by public service commissions, which are readily passing the costs through to customers, especially because burning gas promotes "clean energy." Second, some states have become so enthralled with using gas to solve their pollution problems that they have tacked on all kinds of hidden subsidies, such as mandating that pipelines charge utilities their lowest rates for transmitting supplies.

Finally, market optimization presupposes a free substitution of other resources. The chemical and pharmaceutical industries have no substitute for gas feedstocks in their manufacturing processes. The utilities have one obvious substitute—nuclear power—but it is blocked for political reasons.

Remarkably, the nuclear industry has managed to make a vast contribution anyway—*tripling* generation from 251 billion to 788 billion kilowatt-hours over the last 25 years, increasing nuclear's share of electrical generation from 11 percent to 20 percent. All this has been accomplished by completing plants that were in the pipeline and improving the performance of existing reactors.

Still, a huge hole remains. It is hard to imagine this country having any kind of industrial future without a revival of nuclear power. ♦

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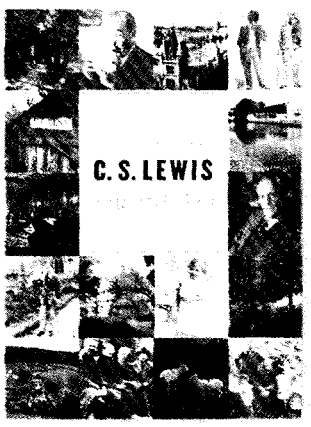

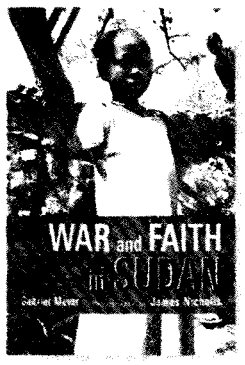

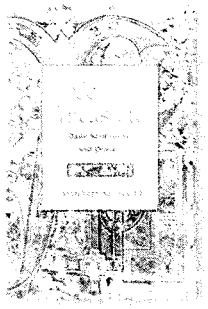

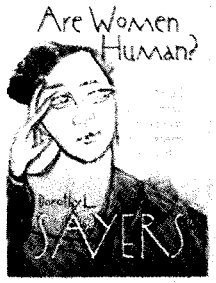

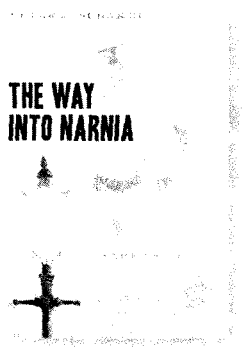

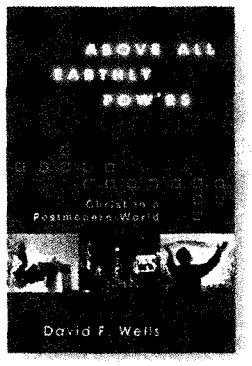

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The Truth about Torture

One side deploys pieties. The other side, euphemisms. It's time to be honest about doing terrible things.

By Charles Krauthammer

During the last few weeks in Washington the pieties about torture have lain so thick in the air that it has been impossible to have a reasoned discussion. The McCain amendment that would ban "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" treatment of any prisoner by any agent of the United States sailed through the Senate by a vote of 90-9. The Washington establishment remains stunned that nine such retrograde, morally inert persons—let alone senators—could be found in this noble capital.

Now, John McCain has great moral authority on this issue, having heroically borne torture at the hands of the North Vietnamese. McCain has made fine arguments in defense of his position. And McCain is acting out of the deep and honorable conviction that what he is proposing is not only right but is in the best interest of the United States. His position deserves respect. But that does not mean, as seems to be the assumption in Washington today, that a critical analysis of his "no torture, ever" policy is beyond the pale.

Let's begin with a few analytic distinctions. For the purpose of torture and prisoner maltreatment, there are three kinds of war prisoners:

First, there is the ordinary soldier caught on the field of battle. There is no question that he is entitled to humane treatment. Indeed, we have no right to disturb a hair on his head. His detention has but a single purpose: to keep him *hors de combat*. The proof of that proposition is that if there were a better way to keep him off the battlefield that did not require his detention, we would let him go. Indeed, during one year of the Civil War, the two sides did try an alternative. They mutually "paroled" captured enemy soldiers, i.e., released them to return home on the pledge that they would not take up arms again. (The experiment failed for a foreseeable reason: cheating. Grant found that some paroled Confederates had reenlisted.)

Because the only purpose of detention in these circumstances is to prevent the prisoner from becoming a combatant again, he is entitled to all the protections and dignity of an ordinary domestic prisoner—indeed, more privileges, because, unlike the domestic prisoner, he has committed no crime. He merely had the misfortune to enlist on the other side of a legitimate war. He is therefore entitled to many of the privileges enjoyed by an ordinary citizen—the right to send correspondence, to engage in athletic activity and intellectual pursuits, to receive allowances from relatives—except, of course, for the freedom to leave the prison.

Second, there is the captured terrorist. A terrorist is by profession, indeed by definition, an unlawful combatant: He lives outside the laws of war because he does not wear a uniform, he hides among civilians, and he deliberately targets innocents. He is entitled to no protections whatsoever. People seem to think that the postwar Geneva Conventions were written only to protect detainees. In fact, their deeper purpose was to provide a deterrent to the kind of barbaric treatment of civilians that had become so horribly apparent during the first half of the 20th century, and in particular, during the Second World War. The idea was to deter the abuse of civilians by promising combatants who treated noncombatants well that they themselves would be treated according to a code of dignity if captured—and, crucially, that they would be denied the protections of that code if they broke the laws of war and abused civilians themselves.

Breaking the laws of war and abusing civilians are what, to understate the matter vastly, terrorists do for a living. They are entitled, therefore, to nothing. Anyone who blows up a car bomb in a market deserves to spend the rest of his life roasting on a spit over an open fire. But

Charles Krauthammer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

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we don't do that because we do not descend to the level of our enemy. We don't do that because, unlike him, we are civilized. Even though terrorists are entitled to no humane treatment, we give it to them because it is in our nature as a moral and humane people. And when on rare occasions we fail to do that, as has occurred in several of the fronts of the war on terror, we are duly disgraced.

The norm, however, is how the majority of prisoners at Guantanamo have been treated. We give them three meals a day, superior medical care, and provision to pray five times a day. Our scrupulousness extends even to providing them with their own Korans, which is the only reason alleged abuses of the Koran at Guantanamo ever became an issue. That we should have provided those who kill innocents in the name of Islam with precisely the document that inspires their barbarism is a sign of the absurd lengths to which we often go in extending undeserved humanity to terrorist prisoners.

Third, there is the terrorist with information. Here the issue of torture gets complicated and the easy pieties don't so easily apply. Let's take the textbook case. Ethics 101: A terrorist has planted a nuclear bomb in New York City. It will go off in one hour. A million people will die. You capture the terrorist. He knows where it is. He's not talking.

Question: If you have the slightest belief that hanging this man by his thumbs will get you the information to save a million people, are you permitted to do it?

Now, on most issues regarding torture, I confess tentativeness and uncertainty. But on this issue, there can be no uncertainty: Not only is it permissible to hang this miscreant by his thumbs. It is a moral duty.

Yes, you say, but that's an extreme and very hypothetical case. Well, not as hypothetical as you think. Sure, the (nuclear) scale is hypothetical, but in the age of the car- and suicide-bomber, terrorists are often captured who have just set a car bomb to go off or sent a suicide bomber out to a coffee shop, and you only have minutes to find out where the attack is to take place. This "hypothetical" is common enough that the Israelis have a term for precisely that situation: the ticking time bomb problem.

And even if the example I gave were entirely hypothetical, the conclusion—yes, in this case even torture is permissible—is telling because it establishes the principle: Torture is not always impermissible. However rare the cases, there are circumstances in which, by any rational moral calculus, torture not only would be permissible but would be required (to acquire life-saving information). And once you've established the principle, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, all that's left to haggle about is the price. In the case of torture, that means that the argument is not *whether* torture is ever permissible, but *when*—i.e., under what obviously stringent circumstances: how big, how imminent, how preventable the ticking time bomb.

That is why the McCain amendment, which by mandating "torture never" refuses even to recognize the legitimacy of any moral calculus, cannot be right. There must be exceptions. The real argument should be over what constitutes a legitimate exception.

Let's take an example that is far from hypothetical. You capture Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in Pakistan. He not only has already killed innocents, he is deeply involved in the planning for the present and future killing of innocents. He not only was the architect of the 9/11 attack that killed nearly three thousand people in one day, most of them dying a terrible, agonizing, indeed tortured death. But as the top al Qaeda planner and logistical expert he also knows a lot about terror attacks to come. He knows plans, identities, contacts, materials, cell locations, safe houses, cased targets, etc. What do you do with him?

We have recently learned that since 9/11 the United States has maintained a series of "black sites" around the world, secret detention centers where presumably high-level terrorists like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed have been imprisoned. The world is scandalized. Black sites? Secret detention? Jimmy Carter calls this "a profound and radical change in the . . . moral values of our country." The Council of Europe demands an investigation, calling the claims "extremely worrying." Its human rights commissioner declares "such practices" to constitute "a serious human rights violation, and further proof of the crisis of values" that has engulfed the war on terror. The gnashing of teeth and rending of garments has been considerable.

I myself have not gnashed a single tooth. My garments remain entirely unrent. Indeed, I feel reassured. It would be a gross dereliction of duty for any government *not* to keep Khalid Sheikh Mohammed isolated, disoriented, alone, despairing, cold and sleepless, in some godforsaken hidden location in order to find out what he knew about plans for future mass murder. What are we supposed to do? Give him a nice cell in a warm Manhattan prison, complete with Miranda rights, a mellifluent lawyer, and his own website? Are not those the kinds of courtesies we extended to the 1993 World Trade Center bombers, then congratulated ourselves on how we "brought to justice" those responsible for an attack that barely failed to kill tens of thousands of Americans, only to discover a decade later that we had accomplished nothing—indeed, that some of the disclosures at the trial had helped Osama bin Laden avoid U.S. surveillance?

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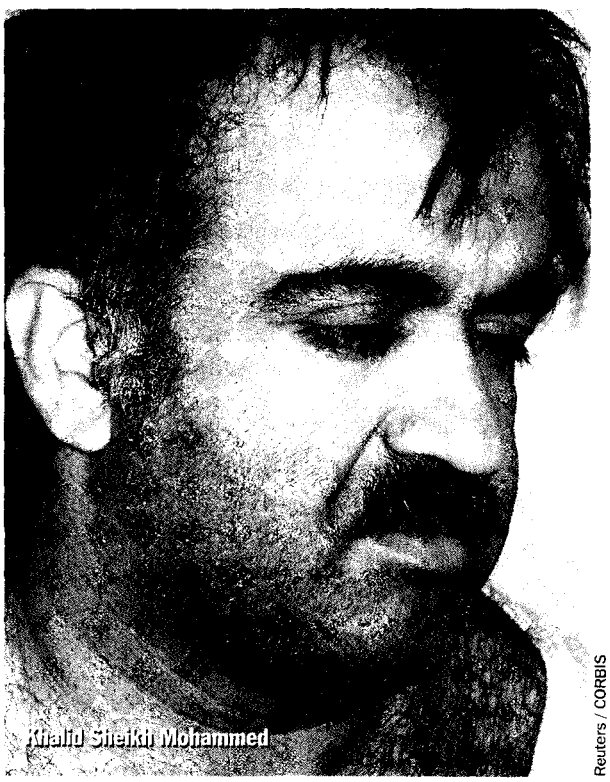
Have we learned nothing from 9/11? Are we prepared to go back with complete amnesia to the domestic-crime model of dealing with terrorists, which allowed us to sleepwalk through the nineties while al Qaeda incubated and grew and metastasized unmolested until on 9/11 it finished what the first World Trade Center bombers had begun?

Let's assume (and hope) that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has been kept in one of these black sites, say, a cell somewhere in Romania, held entirely incommunicado and subjected to the kind of "coercive interrogation" that I described above. McCain has been going around praising the Israelis as the model of how to deal with terrorism and prevent terrorist attacks. He does so because in 1999 the Israeli Supreme Court outlawed all torture in the course of interrogation. But in reality, the Israeli case is far more complicated. And the complications reflect precisely the dilemmas regarding all coercive interrogation, the weighing of the lesser of two evils: the undeniable inhumanity of torture versus the abdication of the duty to protect the victims of a potentially preventable mass murder.


Khalid Sheikh Mohammed

Reuters / CORBIS

In a summary of Israel's policies, Glenn Frankel of the *Washington Post* noted that the 1999 Supreme Court ruling struck down secret guidelines established 12 years earlier that allowed interrogators to use the kind of physical and psychological pressure I described in imagining how KSM might be treated in America's "black sites."

"But after the second Palestinian uprising broke out a year later, and especially after a devastating series of suicide bombings of passenger buses, cafes and other civilian targets," writes Frankel, citing human rights lawyers and detainees, "Israel's internal security service, known as the Shin Bet or the Shabak, returned to physical coercion as a standard practice." Not only do the techniques used "command widespread support from the Israeli public," but "Israeli prime ministers and justice ministers with a variety of political views," including the most conciliatory and liberal, have defended these techniques "as a last resort in preventing terrorist attacks."

Which makes McCain's position on torture incoherent. If this kind of coercive interrogation were imposed on any inmate in the American prison system, it would immediately be declared cruel and unusual, and outlawed. How can he oppose these practices, which the Israelis use, and yet hold up Israel as a model for dealing with terrorists? Or does he countenance this kind of interrogation in extreme circumstances—in which case, what is left of his categorical opposition to inhuman treatment of any kind?

But let us push further into even more unpleasant territory, the territory that lies beyond mere coercive interrogation and beyond McCain's self-contradictions. How far are we willing to go?

This "going beyond" need not be cinematic and ghoulish. (Jay Leno once suggested "duct tape" for Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. See photo.) Consider, for example, injection with sodium pentathol. (Colloquially known as "truth serum," it is nothing of the sort. It is a barbiturate whose purpose is to sedate. Its effects are much like that of alcohol: disinhibiting the higher brain centers to make someone more likely to disclose information or thoughts that might otherwise be guarded.) Forcible sedation is a clear violation of bodily integrity. In a civilian context it would be considered assault. It is certainly impermissible under any prohibition of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Let's posit that during the interrogation of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, perhaps early on, we got intelligence about an imminent al Qaeda attack. And we had a very good reason to believe he knew about it. And if we knew what he knew, we could stop it. If we thought we could glean a critical piece of information by use of sodium pentathol, would we be permitted to do so?

Less hypothetically, there is waterboarding, a terrifying and deeply shocking torture technique in which the prisoner has his face exposed to water in a way that gives the feeling of drowning. According to CIA sources cited by ABC News, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed "was able to last between two and 2 1/2 minutes before begging to con-

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fess." Should we regret having done that? Should we abolish by law that practice, so that it could never be used on the next Khalid Sheikh Mohammed having thus gotten his confession?

And what if he possessed information with less imminent implications? Say we had information about a cell that he had helped found or direct, and that cell was planning some major attack and we needed information about the identity and location of its members. A rational moral calculus might not permit measures as extreme as the nuke-in-Manhattan scenario, but would surely permit measures beyond mere psychological pressure.

Such a determination would not be made with an untroubled conscience. It would be troubled because there is no denying the monstrous evil that is any form of torture. And there is no denying how corrupting it can be to the individuals and society that practice it. But elected leaders, responsible above all for the protection of their citizens, have the obligation to tolerate their own sleepless nights by doing what is necessary—and only what is necessary, nothing more—to get information that could prevent mass murder.

Given the gravity of the decision, if we indeed cross the Rubicon—as we must—we need rules. The problem with the McCain amendment is that once you have gone public with a blanket ban on all forms of coercion, it is going to be very difficult to publicly carve out exceptions. The Bush administration is to be faulted for having attempted such a codification with the kind of secrecy, lack of coherence, and lack of strict enforcement that led us to the McCain reaction.

What to do at this late date? Begin, as McCain does, by banning all forms of coercion or inhuman treatment by anyone serving in the military—an absolute ban on torture by all military personnel everywhere. We do not want a private somewhere making these fine distinctions about ticking and slow-fuse time bombs. We don't even want colonels or generals making them. It would be best for the morale, discipline, and honor of the Armed Forces for the United States to maintain an absolute prohibition, both to simplify their task in making decisions and to offer them whatever reciprocal treatment they might receive from those who capture them—although I have no illusion that any anti-torture provision will soften the heart of a single jihadist holding a knife to the throat of a captured American soldier. We would impose this restriction on ourselves for our own reasons of military discipline and military honor.

Outside the military, however, I would propose, contra McCain, a ban against all forms of torture, coercive interrogation, and inhuman treatment, except in two contingencies: (1) the ticking time bomb and (2) the slower-fuse high-level terrorist (such as KSM). Each contingency would have its own set of rules. In the case of the ticking time bomb, the rules would be relatively simple: Nothing rationally related to getting accurate information would be ruled out. The case of the high-value suspect with slow-fuse information is more complicated. The principle would be that the level of inhumanity of the measures used (moral honesty is essential here—we would be using measures that are by definition inhumane) would be proportional to the need and value of the information. Interrogators would be constrained to use the least inhumane treatment necessary relative to the magnitude and imminence of the evil being prevented and the importance of the knowledge being obtained.

These exceptions to the no-torture rule would not be granted to just any nonmilitary interrogators, or anyone with CIA credentials. They would be reserved for highly specialized agents who are experts and experienced in interrogation, and who are known not to abuse it for the satisfaction of a kind of sick sadomasochism Lynndie England and her cohorts indulged in at Abu Ghraib. Nor would they be acting on their own. They would be required to obtain written permission for such interrogations from the highest political authorities in the country (cabinet level) or from a quasi-judicial body modeled on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (which permits what would ordinarily be illegal searches and seizures in the war on terror). Or, if the bomb was truly ticking and there was no time, the interrogators would be allowed to act on their own, but would require post facto authorization within, say, 24 hours of their interrogation, so that they knew that whatever they did would be subject to review by others and be justified only under the most stringent terms.

One of the purposes of these justifications would be to establish that whatever extreme measures are used are for reasons of nothing but information. Historically, the torture of prisoners has been done for a variety of reasons apart from information, most prominently reasons of justice or revenge. We do not do that. We should not do that. Ever. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, murderer of 2,973 innocents, is surely deserving of the most extreme suffering day and night for the rest of his life. But it is neither our role nor our right to be the agents of that suffering. Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord. His, not ours. Torture is a terrible and monstrous thing, as degrading and morally corrupting to those who practice it as any conceivable human activity including its moral twin, capital punishment.

If Khalid Sheikh Mohammed knew nothing, or if we

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had reached the point where his knowledge had been exhausted, I'd be perfectly prepared to throw him into a nice, comfortable Manhattan cell and give him a trial to determine what would be fit and just punishment. But as long as he had useful information, things would be different.

Very different. And it simply will not do to take refuge in the claim that all of the above discussion is superfluous because torture never works anyway. Would that this were true. Unfortunately, on its face, this is nonsense. Is one to believe that in the entire history of human warfare, no combatant has ever received useful information by the use of pressure, torture, or any other kind of inhuman treatment? It may indeed be true that torture is not a reliable tool. But that is very different from saying that it is *never* useful.

The monstrous thing about torture is that sometimes it does work. In 1994, 19-year-old Israeli corporal Nachshon Waxman was kidnapped by Palestinian terrorists. The Israelis captured the driver of the car used in the kidnapping and tortured him in order to find where Waxman was being held. Yitzhak Rabin, prime minister and peacemaker, admitted that they tortured him in a way that went even beyond the '87 guidelines for "coercive interrogation" later struck down by the Israeli Supreme Court as too harsh. The driver talked. His information was accurate. The Israelis found Waxman. "If we'd been so careful to follow the ['87] Landau Commission [which *allowed* coercive interrogation]," explained Rabin, "we would never have found out where Waxman was being held."

In the Waxman case, I would have done precisely what Rabin did. (The fact that Waxman's Palestinian captors killed him during the Israeli rescue raid makes the case doubly tragic, but changes nothing of the moral calculus.) Faced with a similar choice, an American president would have a similar obligation. To do otherwise—to give up the chance to find your soldier lest you sully yourself by authorizing torture of the person who possesses potentially lifesaving information—is a deeply immoral betrayal of a soldier and countryman. Not as cosmically immoral as permitting a city of one's countrymen to perish, as in the Ethics 101 case. But it remains, nonetheless, a case of moral abdication—of a kind rather parallel to that of the principled pacifist. There is much to admire in those who refuse on principle ever to take up arms under any conditions. But that does not make pure pacifism, like no-torture absolutism, any less a form of moral foolishness, tinged with moral vanity. Not reprehensible, only deeply reproachable and supremely impracticable. People who hold such beliefs are deserving of a certain respect. But they are not to be put in positions of authority. One should be grateful for the saintly among us. And one should be vigilant that they not get to make the decisions upon which the lives of others depend.

Which brings us to the greatest irony of all in the torture debate. I have just made what will be characterized as the pro-torture case contra McCain by proposing two major exceptions carved out of any no-torture rule: the ticking time bomb and the slow-fuse high-value terrorist. McCain supposedly is being hailed for defending all that is good and right and just in America by standing foursquare against any inhuman treatment. Or is he?

According to *Newsweek*, in the ticking time bomb case McCain says that the president should disobey the very law that McCain seeks to pass—under the justification that "you do what you have to do. But you take responsibility for it." But if torturing the ticking time bomb suspect is "what you have to do," then why has McCain been going around arguing that such things must never be done?

As for exception number two, the high-level terrorist with slow-fuse information, Stuart Taylor, the superb legal correspondent for *National Journal*, argues that with appropriate legal interpretation, the "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" standard, "though vague, is said by experts to codify . . . the commonsense principle that the toughness of interrogation techniques should be calibrated to the importance and urgency of the information likely to be obtained." That would permit "some very aggressive techniques . . . on that small percentage of detainees who seem especially likely to have potentially life-saving information." Or as Evan Thomas and Michael Hirsh put it in the *Newsweek* report on McCain and torture, the McCain standard would "presumably allow for a sliding scale" of torture or torture-lite or other coercive techniques, thus permitting "for a very small percentage—those High Value Targets like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—some pretty rough treatment."

But if that is the case, then McCain embraces the same exceptions I do, but prefers to pretend he does not. If that is the case, then his much-touted and endlessly repeated absolutism on inhumane treatment is merely for show. If that is the case, then the moral preening and the phony arguments can stop now, and we can all agree that in this real world of astonishingly murderous enemies, in two very circumscribed circumstances, we must all be prepared to torture. Having established that, we can then begin to work together to codify rules of interrogation for the two very unpleasant but very real cases in which we are morally permitted—indeed morally compelled—to do terrible things. ♦

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Staying in Vegas

Seventy-five years ago, my family placed a winning bet on a small Nevada town . . .

By Allison R. Hayward

Las Vegas

"So, was it at the Graceland Chapel with the Elvis impersonator?" I've heard this question more than once, asked with raised eyebrows and a chuckle after an acquaintance learns I was married in Las Vegas. Surprise yields to amazement when they learn that the ceremony was not only held in an Episcopal cathedral, but was also conducted by a priest who as far as I know declines to don a white rhinestone-studded jumpsuit, even in private.

You see, Las Vegas, the ultimate transient metropolis, is my hometown. The city celebrated its centenary this year—it was born with an auction of downtown railroad land in 1905. But it seems to me that Las Vegas has been more often celebrated by its visitors—drawn by the advertising slogan that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas—than by its residents. We stayed. My family has been there for 75 of those 100 years. People usually wonder why. Were they mobsters? Entertainers? Well, no, which is not to say that my family doesn't have its entertaining element.

My mother's family is LDS, and came with many other Mormons (and non-Mormons) to live in Las Vegas in the early 1930s. They were from a prominent Mormon clan—my grandmother was the eldest daughter of the first of her father's five wives (simultaneous, not sequential as might be the case today). With the nation locked in Depression, there were opportunities for work in southern Nevada. At that time, the Las Vegas area was home to about 5,000 residents, a 20-bed hospital with one doctor and one nurse, and a cluster of businesses of various sorts around Fremont Street. Winter in Las Vegas is cool but dry and pleasant. Summer is not. Temperatures regularly exceed 105 and on some days 115. Since residential air conditioning was not available until well into the 1950s, some families, including my mother's, would move out of town for the hottest months of the summer. Anyone left sought refuge in a movie theater, I suppose, since theaters had commercial cooling. People routinely slept outdoors.

My grandfather, "Heinie" Stevenson, decamped to Las Vegas in 1930 in advance of the family to inspect opportunities, and stayed with his sister, my Great Aunt Lillian, perhaps the most interesting member of the cast. The family moved in 1931, in time for my mother and her brother and sister to start school.

Aunt Lillian in her later years was a voracious bridge player in a house filled with oriental carpets and art objects from her travels. She must have been something in 1925 when, as a 35-year-old widow (her first husband died in China in about 1922—they were tourists there, and he fell ill) she married A.B. Witcher, then 53, who had mining, financial, and political interests in the bustling burg of Ely, Nevada. They left for Las Vegas in 1927 or '28, under "pressure," say some, and began investing in Las Vegas real estate. With a partner, Prosper J. Goumond (also from Ely and with some "professional" experience in Midwest gambling), they established the Boulder Club on Fremont Street a year later. Witcher, Aunt Lillian, and my grandfather were instrumental in the successful effort to legalize gambling, passed by the Nevada legislature in March 1931. Witcher lobbied legislators while my grandfather drove Lillian to Carson City with petitions from the Las Vegas area supporting legalization. Today, that's a speedy 450 miles on the desert highways; with the "roads" that then existed, it took two days.

Shouldn't everyone have a business partner named "Prosper"? And prosper they did. The Goumond house had the first private swimming pool in town, fed by an artesian well. Today, of course, almost everyone in Las Vegas has a pool as a way of coping with the hot summer weather.

Allison R. Hayward is an attorney and writer in the Washington, D.C., area. She is working on a book about campaign finance regulation, and her thoughts on that topic, as well as others, can be found at www.skepticseye.com.

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The real birth of modern Las Vegas—and of a turn in my family's fortunes—should be dated to 1931. Gambling was legalized, the (permissive) six-week residency requirement for divorce was enacted, and the government began building Hoover Dam. The 1931 Gaming Act was unusual for that time only in its breadth. With the Depression, several other states had liberalized gaming laws at about the same time as a way to raise revenue and boost the economy, but they limited the activity to bingo and race wagering—unlimited casino operations were beyond the pale for other jurisdictions.

Witcher and Goumond's Boulder Club, along with the other original Fremont Street clubs, did well with the business from Hoover Dam, and later from the military, as well as a nascent tourist industry from (mostly) California. Tom Wolfe famously observed that "Las Vegas is the only town in the world whose skyline is made up neither of buildings like New York, nor of trees, . . . but signs." So it may be of more than passing interest that the Boulder Club installed the first Fremont Street neon sign in 1945, built by the Young Electric Sign Company. Young Electric's neon signs for the Eldorado Club, the Golden Nugget, and others followed in 1948, and Vegas Vic, the 75-foot mechanical cowboy, was installed in 1951.

Photos courtesy Nevada State Museum and Historical Society

The Boulder Club's new sign goes up, 1945.

Today, part of that neon history is preserved on a small scale, interspersed among the peddlers at the Fremont Street Experience, a pedestrian mall. My favorite is the martini glass from the Red Barn, which was the—shhhh—gay bar in town when I was growing up. Yes, there was a gay bar. One. Yes, it was giggle-inducing to 12-year-olds. Yes, even in Las Vegas.

The Boulder Club provided steady work for my grandfather during the Depression and beyond. He kept the books, did the payroll, and wired the lighting. He retired from his position as "the guy who knows everything" at 70 in 1963, the year I was born. The Boulder Club prospered for a few more years after Witcher's death in 1946, with other investors moving in. Then the club had a disastrous fire in 1956, about the time Benny Binion was interested in expanding his Horseshoe club into the adjacent property. So the Boulder Club lived on, in a way, as a landlord to the Horseshoe. I can remember occasions as a child in the 1970s when people from Binion's Horseshoe would call on my grandfather to ask how something in the old Boulder Club space worked. My grandfather gave me an antique slot machine from the club, a novelty Buckley Bars machine that pays on lemons. It sits in our sunroom now, an object of curiosity for the Virginia neighbors.

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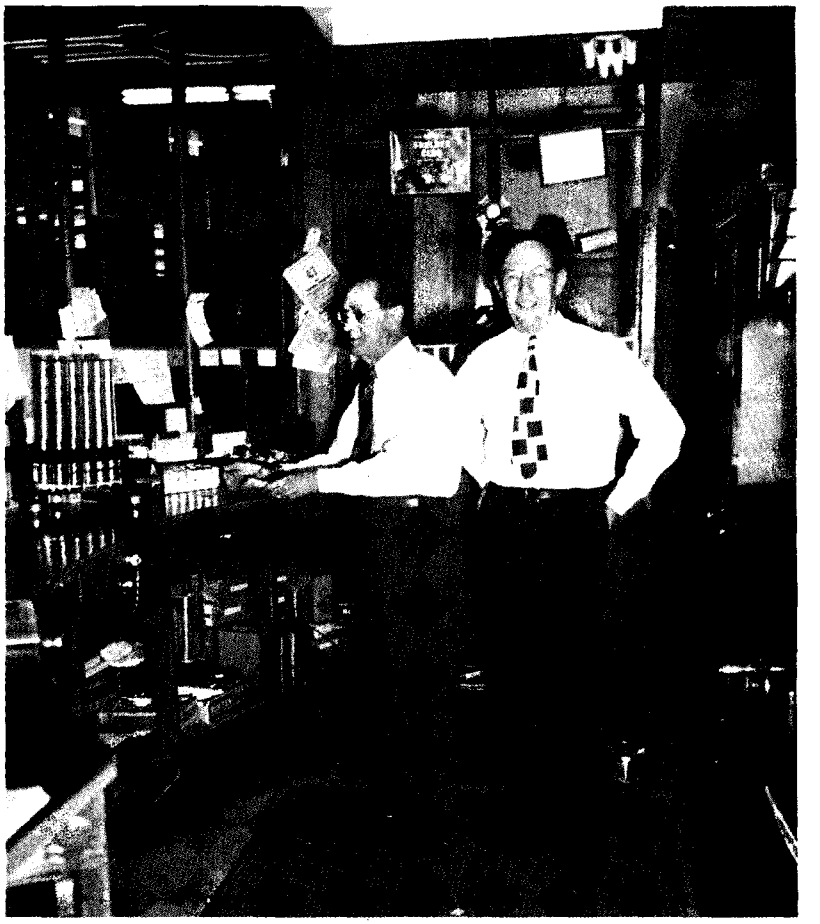
The Boulder Club name may no longer be familiar to those outside Vegas, but everyone has heard of Binion's Horseshoe thanks to the poker craze of recent years. Benny Binion opened the Horseshoe in what had been the Eldorado Club in 1951, establishing it as the "fancy spot" along Fremont Street by installing carpet and guaranteeing to cover any bet, no matter the amount. As a convicted felon, Binion lost his gaming license in the 1950s and became a "consultant" to the Horseshoe. He liked poker (casinos usually didn't offer it, since it takes up valuable floor space) and acquired the World Series of Poker in 1970, making it a winner-take-all game open to anyone with the $10,000 stake. In 2002, the World Series of Poker had 7,595 entries and $19,599,230 in prize money, not to mention the millions of fans attracted by the coverage on ESPN.



Prosper Goumond (left) and Heinie Stevenson, at the Boulder Club

Binion's World Series made "Texas hold'em" a household name, but time has not been so kind to the Horseshoe. The senior Binion passed away on Christmas Day 1989, and the junior Binions fell into what you might call profound management differences. Daughter Becky Behnen assumed control in June 1998 from brothers Jack and Ted Binion. Ted died a few months later from a drug overdose, an apparent murder for which his girlfriend (a former exotic dancer) and her married (to someone else) lover were tried twice before acquittal. (The girlfriend was first represented by then-defense attorney and now mayor of Las Vegas Oscar Goodman, and later by Alan Dershowitz.) Part of the reason Ted Binion's death might have seemed suspicious is that said married lover was found in the desert, a night or two after Ted's demise, excavating Binion's silver vault containing an estimated $10 million in rare coins.

Meanwhile, the Horseshoe did not prosper. Short on cash, the owners liquidated a popular display of $1 million in $10,000 bills. Its reserves (the amount of cash a casino legally must have on hand to cover bets) ran below state requirements. The casino fell behind on payments to the power company, employee health care providers, landowners (including my family), and the unions, among others. Under this accumulated pressure, the Horseshoe was forced to close its doors in January 2004. It was sold to the Harrah's chain, which kept the "Horseshoe" name and the World Series of Poker, and sold the rest to MTR Gaming. Since March 2005, MTR has operated the downtown site as "Binion's." But poker has moved on. I was surprised when a recent *New York Times Magazine* article about Las Vegas poker champions made no mention of the Horseshoe.

Although famous as a tourist destination, the city may ultimately make history as the fastest-growing place ever. When I graduated from high school in the early '80s, there were about 470,000 people living in the Las Vegas area. A decade later, there were about 742,000. Estimates from mid-2004 placed the population at 1.6 million.

The growth was so dramatic that, of the 346 census tracts for the Las Vegas metro area, 301 were wholly new in the 2000 census. Massive new suburban enclaves have been built to house the arrivals, and with a job growth rate of 5.2 percent, people keep coming. Posh, gated neighborhoods occupy the desert where my parents and I would go hunting for arrowheads and petroglyphs. But despite popular views to the contrary, Las Vegas is not the poster city for sprawl—it is more densely developed than Portland, Oregon, a town embraced by the smart growth set. And it is getting denser: The average census tract in Las Vegas grew 41 percent more dense in the 1990s, while in Portland the figure was 25.6 percent.

The keys to the growth of the Las Vegas valley have always been water and power. The power came from the

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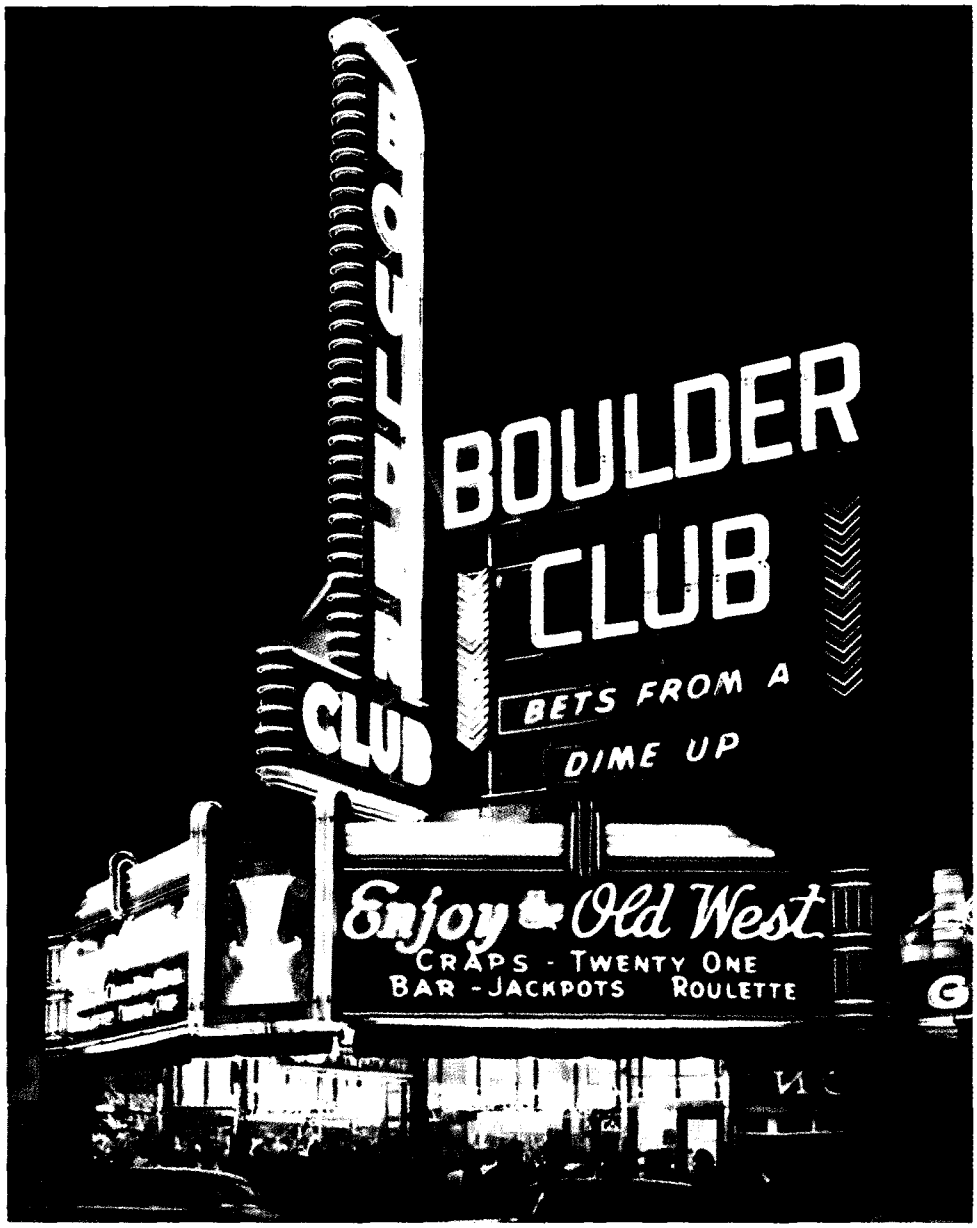

Nighttime on Fremont Street

dam and from coal-burning power plants in Utah. The water came from artesian wells and the Colorado River. Here, my late father, Pete Rittenhouse, makes an appearance. He was an attorney specializing in mining, water, and probate matters. He was born in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, which in the 1930s was roughly the same size as Las Vegas at about 5,000 residents—and is roughly the same size today. After arriving in Las Vegas in 1951, he ascended to the highest reaches of law practice and served as assistant U.S. attorney and U.S. attorney for Nevada during the Eisenhower administration from 1954-58. (There were only three attorneys in the office; I am told that among other official achievements, they wiretapped suspected mobsters.) In private practice, he represented an assortment of mining and water interests, and served as the Water District's counsel during the negotiation of the Southern Nevada Water Project in the 1960s, a necessary precursor to the growth of the city.

My family at first lived in a postwar cinder-block house like those that populate most of the suburbs of Los Angeles and other western cities. While I was in preschool, however, my parents built a custom home in what my mother calls "Arizona territorial" style, with lots of redwood and a beige brick called slumpstone. The architect, Bob Fielden, is still active in Las Vegas and has designed a number of public buildings, but remains frustrated that designers there aren't more conscious of their surroundings—perhaps a side effect of the rapid growth. "Las Vegas," he says, "has become a photocopy for every prototype structure built everywhere else in the world. All of the suburban development, all of the new condos, all of the strip malls are copies of buildings originally designed for other locales. There is little if anything that reflects the natural environment of the Mojave Desert." Fielden's daughter, Laura Spina (a friend of mine from junior high school), adds that with the incredible population growth in Las Vegas, design is inevitably done by "firms from out of town or who have recently moved here for the big boom. They rarely understand the intensities of our arid environment. A perfect example is a bank that was completely constructed of black glass. Can you imagine what their cooling bills are like?"

Like many Las Vegas homeowners, my parents landscaped their large backyard in grass that resembles a golf course (lawns are cool and comfortable). This has placed high demands on the water supply. Local water authorities are now trying to break Las Vegans of their addiction to turf. Ordinances prohibit front lawns in new construction, and a local commission will pay owners of existing lawns $1 per square foot of lawn replaced with Xeriscape.

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If she decided to move to cactus and gravel, my mother could get over $10,000 for her lawn, certainly more than it would fetch on eBay. Given the enormous growth in the area, the water savings from such measures are not trivial.

Can Las Vegas continue to grow? Skeptics predict the end is near. But as noted to me by Bob Naylor, a former California legislator, chairman of the California Republican party, and eminent Sacramento government attorney—who also happens to be a member of Las Vegas High School's class of 1962—those doubts are nothing new. "After almost every hotel building boom since the fifties, conventional wisdom had it that the town just could not attract enough tourists to justify any more hotels," recalls Naylor. "They keep saying that, and new hotel booms keep happening." Tourism isn't the only fuel for growth. "Las Vegas and Nevada have benefited incalculably by having no income tax and relying on revenues from gambling. Californians leave behind gambling losses, Nevada keeps its taxes low, and all kinds of businesses flee California's high tax [and regulatory] regime to open shop in Nevada." Naylor predicts: "Look for that to continue as long as there is land."

Among my earliest memories are trips to the grocery store with my mother. Visitors are surprised that the grocery stores in Las Vegas all contain slot machines. We regularly shopped at Vegas Village, a grocery store combined with a Wal-Mart-esque dry goods store and liquor department. The bank of slot machines at the entrance was a veritable casino. It seemed like the same clique of ladies held forth there whenever we went shopping. I recall lots of puffy hair, long nails, and cigarettes. A local attorney and poet, Dayvid Figler, once quipped that the official snack food of Las Vegas is the cigarette, and he's right.

Slot machine arcades remain a staple alongside the Fritos and band-aids in most chain and convenience stores, not to mention in pubs, restaurants, and that casino-with-occasional-air-service known as McCarran International Airport. Despite what some people may expect, national chains like Rite-Aid or Safeway aren't the gaming licensee—subject to the vigorous and necessarily invasive scrutiny of the Gaming Commission and the Gaming Control Board.

Instead, space in stores is leased to independent concessioners screened and licensed with the state. One of the largest operators of grocery-store slot arcades is Herbst Gaming. The company's slot machine "route operations" manage 6,800 machines. This business yielded operating income of $44.7 million in 2004, according to their filings with the SEC.

Herbst Gaming is managed by the three Herbst brothers—the middle one, Tim, I remember from Mrs. Smith's first grade class at West Charleston Elementary School. Unfortunately for Tim and his family, and like many native Las Vegans, neither my mother nor I gamble, at the grocery store or anywhere else. The vision one gets from popular essays such as Tom Wolfe's "Las Vegas (What?)" of locals wandering the clubs with Dixie cups of coins pulling slot machine handles may be true for people who live in Las Vegas temporarily, but a casual poll I took of my friends and acquaintances from "permanent" Las Vegas suggests that we gamble rarely, if at all.

Las Vegas appeals to outsiders as a safe harbor of libidinous freedom. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, right? Las Vegas should be the headquarters of the Leave-Us-Alone coalition, shouldn't it? The late Murray Rothbard, eminent libertarian scholar, after all, did end up as a distinguished professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

But Las Vegas would have remained a dusty train depot had it not been for massive support from the federal government. Hoover Dam, the Bombing and Gunnery Range, Nellis Air Force Base, and federal power and water projects all brought people to the valley and gave them a tolerable place to live. Why Las Vegas? In a transcript from an interview with a local oral history project, Ed Von Tobel, from one of the city's first families, noted that many of the federal projects "could have gone elsewhere. They could have gone to Reno or they could have gone to anywhere, to Salt Lake City." Luckily for Las Vegas, they didn't. To be sure, luck comes to the well-prepared town. When federal spending is at issue, the best preparation is Beltway influence, and Nevada, for its size, has seen its share of heavy-hitting senators, Paul Laxalt (1974-87), Howard Cannon (1959-83), and Pat McCarran (1932-54), to name three. Attitude and acceptance matter, too. Nevada was able to accommodate the atomic testing at the Nevada Test Site with nonchalance. Bob Naylor told me he remembers delivering newspapers on his bike in the predawn hours and seeing the sky light up like daytime with the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear bomb 90 miles north of Las Vegas.

Will Las Vegas's luck run out? Its attractions initially depended on restrictive social regulations everywhere else in the country. While tourists still enjoy the camp novelty of the "Las Vegas wedding," throngs of unhappy couples no longer depend on Nevada for a no-fault six-week divorce. Efforts to liberalize marriage laws by extending them to homosexuals have gained no traction—none—in Las Vegas, and the Nevada constitution now defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

With the growth of casino gaming in other states (not

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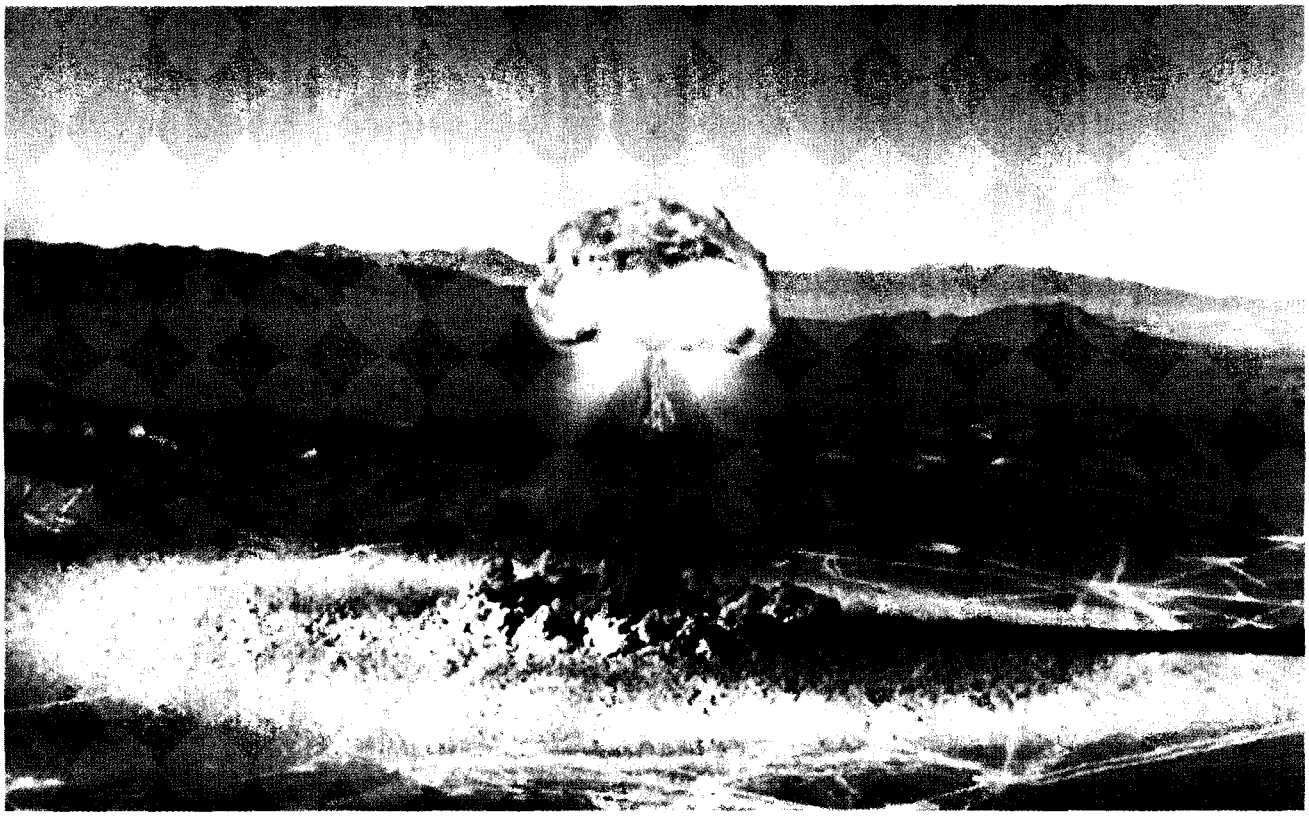

Nevada Test Site, 90 miles north of Las Vegas

to mention on the Internet), a time will come when Las Vegas-style gambling is within anyone's reach. It isn't possible to build Yosemite or Maui just anywhere; it is possible, though, to build a casino wherever there is electricity, water, and a road. On the other hand, you can build an amusement park anywhere, too, and for some reason the Disney properties in Orlando and Anaheim keep rolling along, year after year. So Las Vegas may remain a popular destination because it gives people a place to misbehave temporarily, and has acquired a cachet reflected in Steve Wynn's maxim that "anything that is worth doing is worth OVER-doing." One sign Vegas will continue as the place to let your inner skank run free is the enormous investment at present in condominium towers—marketed as second homes for people who want to golf all day and play all night.

Still, communities outside Nevada are liberalizing gambling and other vice-related regulations. Even staid Virginia has relaxed the Sunday prohibition on liquor sales in the regions nearest Washington, D.C. (in an effort to capture some of that valuable Sunday scotch-and-soda trade). If we find "Las Vegas" in more and more other places, what does that mean for the rest of you? How well can other communities adapt to this kind of activity?

One of the secrets of Las Vegas is that a den of libertine iniquity only works when subject to massive regulation. That pretty escort or topless dancer has been through a background check to get a sheriff's card that allows her to take that job. (So has the maid and the waitress, a point that justifiably sticks in the craw of many working-class Las Vegans.) State authorities keep a blacklist of persons who, because of cheating or ties with undesirables, may not enter a casino that is otherwise open to the public. The city has done a good job of hiding the web of law enforcement and surveillance it casts over gambling and other "adult" activities. Las Vegas may make it look easy, but it isn't.

Multinational corporate owners, with shareholders and regulatory overseers, have replaced the Las Vegas of Midwestern organized crime syndicates. But that took some doing, and over the years Las Vegas had its share of problems that now feed the legend that brings tourists. In my lifetime, I remember when a local attorney and family friend perished after someone rigged explosives to his car. The crime was never solved.

Finally, "gaming" can be a harmless diversion for some, but when high stakes play is available it also attracts desperate people anxious to hit it big, and the kind who prey upon them. Liberalizing local laws is one way to find out who's who in your town, but you might not like what you learn. You also might not like the fact that gambling is a very seductive way to concentrate wealth. Even a Nevada libertarian might have trouble with that. ♦

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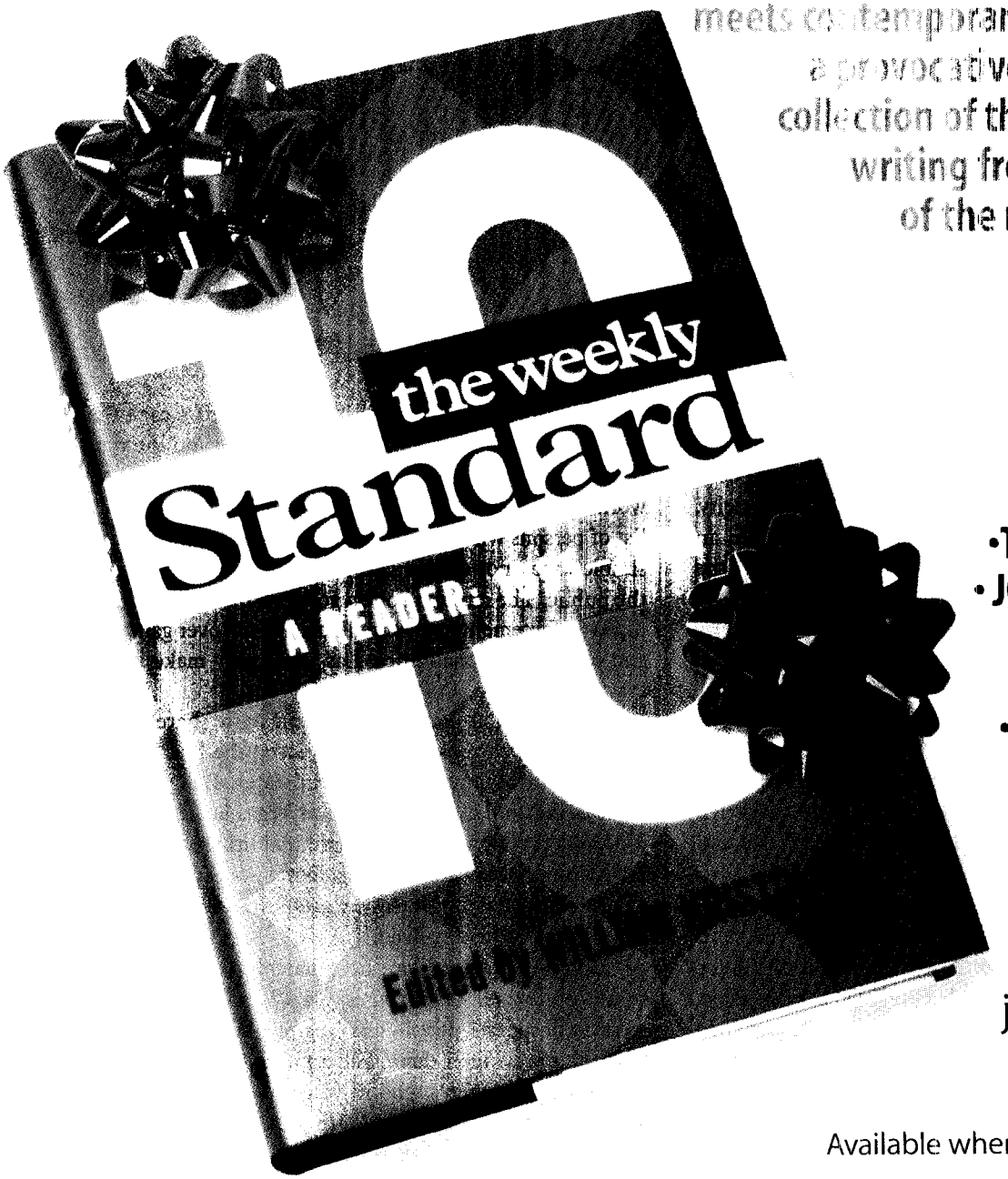

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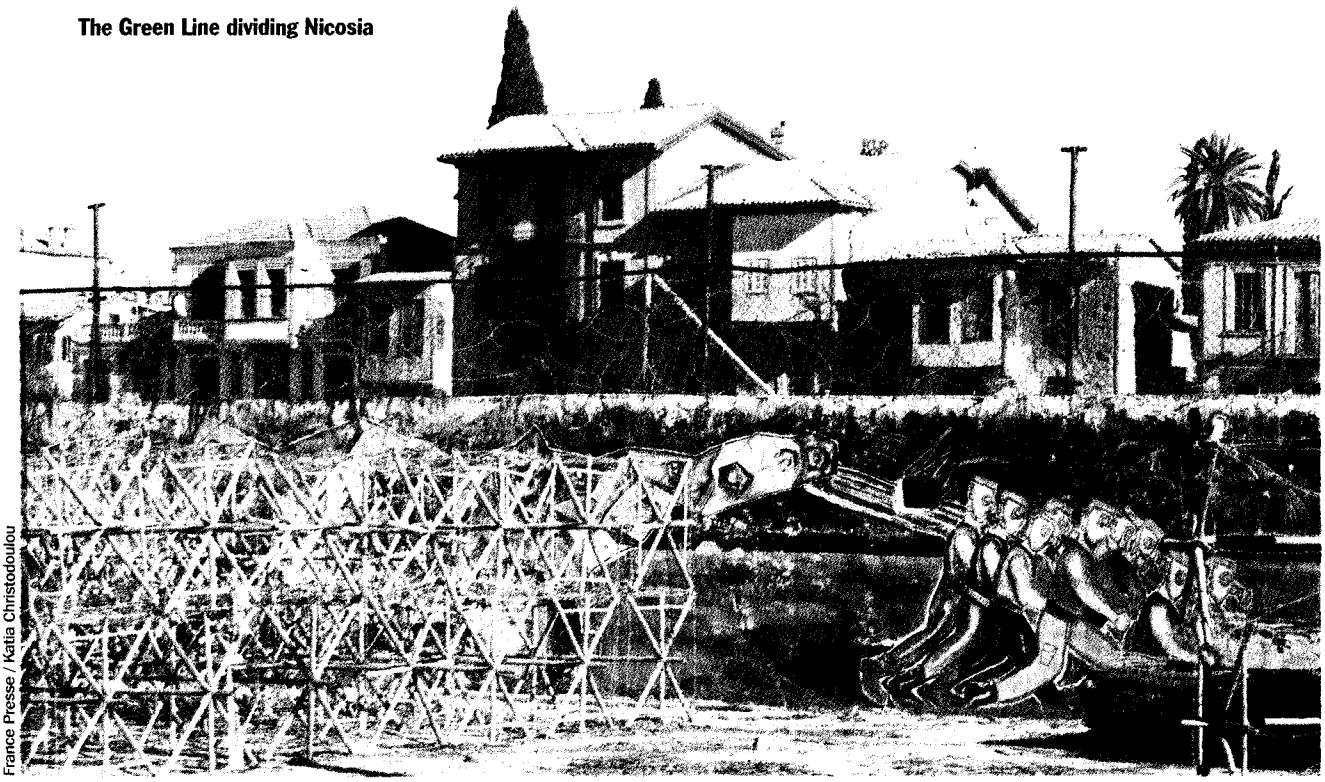

The Green Line dividing Nicosia

France Presse / Katia Christodoulou

Cyprus Betrayed

Another fine mess, courtesy of Kofi Annan's U.N. BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The collapse of the moral authority of the United Nations is partly but not exclusively a matter of dating. The U.N. did lend its flag and insignia to the Anglo-American effort to stop Kim Il Sung's invasion of South Korea, though this official baptism was partly due to the absence of the Soviet delegate, and of his veto, during the crucial vote. Conor Cruise O'Brien, a former Irish envoy to the organization (Ireland, like Spain, having been denied original membership on the grounds that it never declared war on the Axis or joined the original Anglo-American "coalition of the willing") felt that the whole ethos of the "world body" was undermined by its abject failure, during its own first military expedition in 1960, to uphold the new independence of the Congo. He later wrote, in one of the best memoirs of service at the U.N., that it partly redeemed itself by keeping the issue of apartheid alive during the years when South Africa was "represented" only by a racist dictatorship whose leadership had once been interned for pro-Nazi sympathies.

An International Relations Debacle
The U.N. Secretary-General's Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus 1999-2004
by Claire Palley
Hart, 604 pp., $45

At different times, the U.N. has seated Chiang Kai-shek's Taiwan as the representative of China, and Ukraine and Belorussia as if they were independent of the Soviet Union. It has made high moral pronouncements to the effect that the only racism in the Middle East is practiced by Jews. It failed the Hungarians in 1956 and the Czechoslovaks in 1968 and the Tibetans throughout. It gave its top post to an Austrian who acquired his gaunt aspect in the Balkan killing fields of the Third Reich.

A conventional response to this dispiriting tale has been to say that the U.N. cannot be much better than the sum of its parts. This is no more than a tautology, though unlike most tautologies it is worth bearing in mind, since it contrasts with the almost fetishistic degree to which many of the same people believe that only the General Assembly or Security Council possesses the moral or legal authority to adjudicate or authorize a just war.

During the Cold War, the U.N. was indeed often paralyzed by "bloc" politics. Since then, however, there have been failures and disgraces that are

Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for Vanity Fair *and the author of* Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger, *is most recently the author of* Thomas Jefferson: Author of America.

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Archbishop Makarios

Bettmann / Corbis

attributable particularly to the weaknesses of the secretary general. Can one forget Boutros Boutros-Ghali dismissing accusations of the U.N.'s betrayal of Bosnia and sneering that people only minded about Bosnians because they were white? That would have been bad enough, if his deputy Kofi Annan had not almost simultaneously been ignoring the direct warnings from the U.N. commander in Rwanda, General Romeo Dallaire, to the effect that more black Africans were about to be annihilated than anyone had ever seen killed in one week.

The case of Cyprus involves both the failure of the United Nations as an organization and the individual shortcomings of the present secretary general. There were two responsibilities inherited by the U.N. from the postwar League of Nations—the mandates in Palestine and South West Africa—and both of these led to statehood for Israel and, eventually, Namibia. The Republic of Cyprus, however, was a creation of the U.N. itself. A stupid colonial war, waged by the British between 1955 and 1960, essentially considered the island as British property in the same way as the other two European colonies, Ireland and Malta, had once been. The population of the island is roughly 82 percent Greek and 18 percent Turkish (with small but important Armenian and Maronite communities).

The historic Greek majority demanded *enosis*, or "union," with Greece proper, following the pattern of Crete and Rhodes. The Turkish minority echoed Ankara's demand that either the island be returned to Turkey, which had ceded it to Benjamin Disraeli during the Ottoman period as part of his triumphant campaign to secure the Suez Canal for Britain, or else partition it 50/50 between Turkey and Greece. This hopelessly zero-sum dilemma lost all of its charm for the British Tories after their evacuation of the Suez Canal in 1956. They were almost relieved when an Indian diplomat outpointed the Foreign Office by suggesting an independent Cyprus republic, shared between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and "guaranteed" against either *enosis* or *taksim* (the Turkish word for partition) by both Athens and Ankara.

After some fast footwork and the writing of a rather nerve-racking bicommunal constitution, the island became an independent state in 1960 under the presidency of the—for once one can use the word properly—charismatic Archbishop Makarios.

The success or failure of this postcolonial settlement had immense implications. In Cypriot towns and villages, the Orthodox church and the mosque can often be found within a minute's walk of one another. History shows virtually no example of fratricide between Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks when left to themselves. If Muslims and Christians—who shared the *lingua franca* of English—could make a go of coexistence, then a promising example might be set for the immediate neighbors in the Levant. Partly for related reasons, Tito's multiethnic Yugoslavia also attached especial importance to relations with Cyprus.

The Cypriot microcosm did not last nearly as long as Tito's slightly artificial "brotherhood and unity," but this was largely because of the intervention of outside powers. Both Greece and Turkey sponsored extreme irredentist proxies in Cyprus with the help of the CIA, which preferred the ethnic fascists to the island's large Communist and Socialist parties. When this led to intercommunal fighting in 1963-64, President Makarios invited U.N. peacekeepers to prevent further violence, and U.N.FICYP is now one of the oldest U.N. contingents in being.

The relief, though, was purchased at a very high price: The lines drawn by U.N. local commanders became the sketch of a future partition that would reward, not punish, the ethnic extremists.

In the beginning, there were two sets of negotiations. The Greek and Turkish Cypriots elected communal leaders to negotiate local differences, while the recognized Republic of Cyprus dealt at the state level with disagreements among Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain, which retained bases on the island and the status of a "guarantor power" of Cypriot independence.

Over time, however, this essential distinction became blurred. And after 1974, it was abolished. In the summer of that year, after the ruling Greek junta in Athens had mounted a military coup against President Makarios, Turkey seized the opportunity to invade Cyprus. It might be argued that the first of these interventions had some legal justification, as a riposte to a fascist putsch; but in a brutal succeeding invasion the Turkish army grabbed the whole northern third of the island, expelled almost 200,000 Greeks from their homes, set up a "Turkish State of Northern Cyprus," and drew a walled line of partition right through the capital city of Nicosia.

This was the first time since 1945 that any border in Europe had been changed by unilateral force. Mainland Greek and Turkish forces fired on one

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another: the only time that two NATO members had ever done so. A member of the U.N., a candidate member of the European Union, a member of the British Commonwealth, had been violently dismembered. Injury was added by the importation of mainland settlers from Anatolia, aimed at altering the demographic balance of the island.

Faced with such a gross violation of all international laws, the United Nations had no choice but to pass a series of unambiguous and near-unanimous resolutions calling on Turkey to withdraw its forces. But on the ground, in a prefiguration of what was later to happen in Bosnia, the U.N. soldiers defended only themselves. And in subsequent negotiations, the U.N. bureaucracy treated the invader and the victim as morally equivalent.

Actually, the U.N. did worse than that. It did not insist on direct negotiations between the member states, since Turkey simply refuses to recognize the lawful Republic of Cyprus. Instead, it exceeded its mandate and asked the Cyprus government to treat with the proxies whom Turkey had installed as a local regime. Thus, the intercommunal and international strands became hopelessly entangled. Turkey, the real power and negotiator, could always pretend that it did not control its surrogates in Cyprus, and these surrogates could always pretend that their hands were tied by Turkey.

Rather as in today's Darfur, where the *janjaweed* are treated as if they are not Sudanese government mercenaries, the time wasted on the charade can be gainfully employed in completing the ethnic cleansing. Meanwhile, the jagged line of partition—the problem in the first place—began to look more permanent as it was garrisoned and, in effect, enforced by men in blue helmets.

Claire Palley, a renowned Anglo-South African expert in constitutional law, takes up this dismal story at the point where Kofi Annan decided to involve himself personally. Winston Churchill once said of some luckless opponent that he had "sat on the fence so long that the iron had entered into his soul." Kofi Annan's genius for compromise and for splitting differences without regard to principle is of the same order. An extraordinary opportunity presented itself in 2003 when, against all expectations, the Turkish Cypriots—the supposed beneficiaries of partition—rebelled politically against their imposed leadership and demanded to be part of the wider Cypriot accession to the European Union. The Turkish authorities were obliged to open the sealed checkpoints at the border and to permit visits and exchanges to take place from either side.

In this moment of "people power," it took a sort of anti-talent for the secretary general to find the most obstinate demands of the discredited Turkish leadership and to instate them as part of his "plan." Entirely heedless of the repeated U.N. resolutions demanding the demilitarization of the island, he postponed the date of eventual Turkish withdrawal until the remote future, and thus evolved a deal that was just out of the reach of the Greek Cypriot electorate. In a referendum on the proposal last year, the Turkish Cypriots voted "yes" for federal reunification and the Greek Cypriots voted "no."

To have produced this result is to have negated years of patient confidence-building between two estranged, but not divorced, peoples. It has meant that Cyprus joins the EU with its Turkish population still left out, which greatly complicates the wider question of Turkish membership and postpones a resolution until the next generation.

This small but suggestive fiasco will stand, along with others more notorious, as a memorial to Annan's dead-hand effect on international relations. ♦

Hi, Ho! Steverino

Steve Allen was the man who owned midnight.

BY STEFAN KANFER

Incredible as it seems, there was a time when Americans went to sleep at 11 P.M. That was before 1954, the epochal year in which the H-bomb was tested on Bikini atoll; Chiang Kai-shek was elected president of the Republic of China; Joe Welch asked Senator Joe McCarthy if he had no sense of decency; the Geneva Conference partitioned Vietnam into two countries, North and South; the workplace made way for millions of women; Elvis Presley cut his first record; the final episode of *The Lone Ranger* was broadcast on radio; and *The Tonight Show*, starring Steve Allen, debuted on television.

Inventing Late Night
Steve Allen and the Original Tonight Show
by Ben Alba
Prometheus, 368 pp., $26

Nothing was the same after that. The news was watched more intently, dinners were served later because people got home later and the evening stretched on as never before. With angst at an all-time high, the public appetite for diversion increased exponentially. Sensing an opportunity to run commercials where once there were only test patterns, NBC programmers tried something new—a kind of late-night free-for-all, run by a bespectacled thirtysomething emcee with an ability to improvise with ease at the piano and the mike.

Looking back, Allen observed, "I seem to have stumbled in at the right time in history, where a man who owns

Stefan Kanfer is the author of Groucho *and* Ball of Fire. *His next book,* Stardust Lost, *a history of the Yiddish theater, will be published next year.*

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Steve Allen, 1965

Getty Images / Hulton Archive

a combination of fairly mediocre abilities and wears a clean shirt can do well in a particular medium. A hundred years ago, I'd probably have been an unsuccessful writer."

This modesty was both legitimate and false. He might well have failed in the creative arts a century before. But his abilities were far from commonplace, and he knew it. As Ben Alba indicates in this lively hagiography, Allen drove himself hard, and never settled for the safe mediocrity of network programming. The child of vaudevillians, Stephen Valentine Patrick William Allen was intellectually curious from childhood onward, read omnivorously, worked his way through college, wangled himself a job on radio, graduated to local TV, and then, when his ratings hit the sky, went national.

From the start, he brought an enlightened, low-key style to a medium that had been hysterical in tempo and brainless in content. The critic Leonard Feather rightly observed that Allen was "the greatest friend jazz had on television" because he featured so many prominent musicians on his program, from Chet Baker and Marian McPartland to Buddy Rich and Thelonious Monk. But Allen also paid attention to the classical side, and featured, among others, Van Cliburn and Leonard Bernstein, seeding his monologues with references to opera and literature.

At the same time, he made certain not to highbrow himself out of a job. Comedy became an essential part of his persona. One of the most imitated portions of the Tonight Show was "The Question Man," during which Allen supplied the deadpan query to various answers:

Announcer: Butterfield 8—3000.

Allen: How many hamburgers did Butterfield eat?

Announcer: A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou.

Allen: What's on a cannibal's menu?

Whenever he felt that he was getting too verbal, Allen explored the possibilities of the videocam in a series of "crazy shots." Alba describes a series of interludes. In one, Don Knotts "is seated at a diner counter and drops his spoon into the bowl. He reaches deep into the bowl—past his elbow—before he finally reaches and retrieves his spoon." In another, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were cast as Siamese twins joined at the shoulder. When one sipped water from a glass, the other spit it out like a fountain. In a third, an Egyptian mummy's tomb, resting vertically, was opened to reveal singer Steve Lawrence making a call from a pay telephone.

These visuals were also sedulously aped at the time; they still are, by David Letterman, Jay Leno, and almost every talk show host in the country. Eventually, Groucho Marx dubbed Steve "the funniest Allen since Fred," and most of America agreed with him. They came to know Allen and his lineup of fine second bananas—Knotts, Louis Nye, Tom Poston, Bill Dana, et al.—as family members. They put Allen's song "This Could Be the Start of Something Big" on the hit parade, and welcomed new words, concepts, and faces (Albert Brooks, Steve Martin) when the host introduced them.

All very well, said the NBC brass, but a renaissance man was not what nighttime needed. Allen was only allowed to stretch so far. His ambitious plans for something he called "Meeting of the Minds," for example, were immediately nixed as too taxing for the average insomniac. Their star employee had proposed a series of shows that would summon up the spirits of prominent figures. Freud, Hegel, Montaigne, Aristotle, and

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Clarence Darrow would debate the value of capital punishment. Othello, Hamlet, Romeo, and Juliet would discuss the meaning of their speeches with the Bard himself. As usual, Allen was ahead of his time; in 1977, almost 20 years later, PBS broadcast six hour-long "Meeting of the Minds" specials.

In one memorable episode, St. Thomas Aquinas expressed his belief that women were inferior ("Woman should look on man as her natural master"). This did not sit well with Cleopatra (amusingly played by Allen's wife, actress Jayne Meadows). In another, Darwin reproached Attila for his military ruthlessness. Replied the Hun, "I wasn't aware, Dr. Darwin, that the British Empire was built by pacifists." An Emmy and a Peabody award followed.

A decade later, Allen was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame for his lifetime contributions to the medium. These were but a few of the prizes he won in a long professional lifetime. But as Alba points out, the most significant was an unofficial tribute—a bit of dialogue that occurred on *The Simpsons*. Krusty the Clown is replaced by a vulgarian puppet, Gabbo. As Bart and Lisa Simpson watch the television, Gabbo chortles, "And now it's time for another Gabbo crank call!"

> *Bart*: Oh, I can't believe it. He stole this bit from Krusty!
>
> *Lisa*: Well, Krusty stole it from Steve Allen.

Krusty was not alone. Allen died on October 30, 2000, full of honors and tributes, but the pilfering has never stopped. If you would seek his monument, surf around. ♦

When in Rome

How Latin thrived, declined, and was revived.

BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

An old school joke has a clever boy, overwhelmed with the classroom grind, approaching his formidable Latin teacher with a query, "So why must we learn Latin, anyway?" Regally severe and serene, his teacher looks him straight in the eye and replies with the all force of a birch stick slapped across a desk: "So you won't be so bloody ignorant."

A Natural History of Latin
by Tore Janson
Oxford, 305 pp., $24

The answer strikes us as quaint, pungent, and, as the lawyers say, dispositive. Yet it is not, we suspect, quite satisfactory. The old master may be right, but still we're left uncertain as to how an ignorance of Latin makes us, in any obvious sense, ignorant. Surely that's to overstate or misrepresent the case. Washington and Lincoln didn't suffer Latin in school, and they seem to have gotten by swimmingly.

Nonetheless, Latin has a brief. Perhaps the better way to put the case would be to say that, while the ignorance of Latin may not diminish us, a firm acquaintance with the rigors of its literature can fortify us. Certainly the very history of the language testifies to what we might deem the athletically intellectual value of this ancient tongue, training in which can, over time, help work off the fat of bad thinking and vague expression. Latin has been a treasure trove, but it's also been something like a gymnasium.

Much of this long chronicle gets nicely and—despite his expansive subject—thriftily explored by Tore Janson in *A Natural History of Latin*, an odd yet apt title because Latin, with its monumental impact on the thought and feeling of the Western world, can be likened at least as much to a tree as to a grand man made edifice. And the tree is remarkable not only for its roots, which reach deep into time, but also for its extravagant, high-plumed vernacular branches, which have stretched far and, with their own influence, altered the very sound of speech over most of the planet.

Janson tells the tale of how Latin coursed from a *living* language—a language that took on new words and discarded some of the old, one that almost everyone spoke every day in many places for centuries, both in Rome and in the distant outposts of the empire—to an excruciatingly difficult, arcane, crabbed, *learned* language known by the Renaissance to a comparative few, yet one that all people with intellectual aspirations (or, increasingly, pretensions) needed to know.

Latin set standards for thought and expression for those few, and in so migrating from *living* to *learned*, paradoxically spread even farther. It's a bizarre or, as the critics might say, an unlikely story.

But prospective readers should not be put off by Latin's modern reputation for difficulty. Janson assumes no knowledge of the language, of either its history or its structure; his book is, as he says, more "an overview and an appetizer" than an exhaustive, footnoted monograph. And readers are well served. Beginning with the mists of its Indo-European origins, Janson traces its steady growth on the Italian peninsula—a Latin word, by the way—growing stronger and subtler with the politico-military power and cosmopolitan sophistication of the people who spoke it, who eventually met up with the culturally superior Greeks.

He makes fine work of joining early Latin words—*virtus*, *fortitudo*, *senatus*—to the qualities they signified to both

Tracy Lee Simmons, the author of Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin, *is director of the Dow Journalism Program at Hillsdale College.*

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the nascent and mature Romans. He then proceeds to show how written Latin began to make its mark on later generations of the Roman period and beyond, dividing its influence into digests of literary genres and their chief practitioners: history (Livy, Tacitus), rhetoric (Cicero), philosophy (Seneca), and poetry (Virgil, Horace).

To read through these waves of achievement is to see without the necessity of close argument that the modern world as we know it is inconceivable without the Romans' having marched before us. Along with the Greeks, they showed us much about how to think and write. Quoted Latin—with deft, clear translations provided—peppers Janson's examples. This is a catalogue of august accomplishment.

Perhaps inevitably, though, this outline becomes a jog trot, a fast and predictable drive-by of types. Only reading the sections separately will prevent the glazing-over that comes of this kind of summary description.

Yet the journey into that modern world proves just as interesting. As the classical world fragmented and gave way to Europe's sovereign nation-states, Latin kept exerting its reign over thought and feeling, weaving its way through the words of what became, among other languages, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and, by slightly more circuitous routes, German and English. Over 50 percent of English words are Latinate. And here is where we still feel under its sway, for both good and ill.

(We are perfectly free to question its influence, at least provisionally, every time someone says, in a simple letter or memo, that he "circumambulates" something instead of walking around it.)

While most of this book is, indeed, a history of Latin's perambulations (sorry) through the last couple thousand years, Janson felicitously sets off a long closing section explaining the mysteries, which aren't so mysterious after all, of its tight, inflected grammar, along with a lengthy list of Latin phrases—*ad hoc*, *ad hominem*, *anno Domini*, *in toto*, *quid pro quo*—that have insinuated themselves so thoroughly into English that we find no need to replace them with their vernacular forms. The Latin, we sense, somehow says it better.

Despite its golden aura, and despite its image of perpetual imperviousness to the sad work of time, Latin does, indeed, have a history. Yet many people, both those living and those very much dead, would register a quiet dissent, or perhaps only a cautionary rejoinder: Latin doesn't really have a history; to them, Latin is history itself, an embodiment of tradition. And as Janson so ably shows, it is a perennial reminder that tradition is never static, nor does it come cheap. ♦

'Picture' Perfect

Randall Jarrell's classic novel of academic life.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

If Benton had had an administration building with pillars it could have carved over the pillars: *Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you feel guilty*. . . . Many a Benton girl went back to her nice home, married her rich husband, and carried a fox in her bosom for the rest of her life—and short of becoming a social worker, founding a Neo-Socialist party, and then killing herself and leaving her insurance to the United Nations, I do not know how she could have got rid of it.

—*Pictures from an Institution*

Randall Jarrell is most often remembered not as a poet or teacher but as a critic—a discerning and influential appreciator (of Frost and Whitman, for example, when neither was fashionable), but also a hit man with a double-oh number, a Gatling gun who fired devastating one-liners: "[These poems give] the impression of having been written on a typewriter by a typewriter." Praise and blame sprang from the passionate belief that poems *mattered*.

His only work of fiction, *Pictures from an Institution*, turned 50 this year. It is *sui generis*—set at insanely progressive Benton College, but not a "campus novel" and not, in fact, a novel at all, if such niceties as plot, character development, and dramatic conflict are insisted on. It is, as the title suggests, a gallery of portraits. It is above all a performance, an exuberant high-wire act its author could classify only as a "prose book." One is tempted simply to quote—for example, the famous description of the president of Benton College as "so perfectly well adjusted to his environment that sometimes you could not tell which was the environment and which was President Robbins."

As might be expected, *Pictures* delivers an impressive body count. As might be feared, it occasionally assaults the reader with epigrams, each trying gamely to top the last. (At least one critic has said that it's the sort of book you can put down.) But more than enough hit home to make the book great fun, even as it acquires emotional depth from a core of sadness. Like much of Jarrell's poetry, it's about loss. When earnest Flo Whittaker (a kinder, gentler Mrs. Jellaby) inevitably quotes, "We must love one another or die," Gottfried Rosenbaum, the book's moral center, replies, "We must love one another *and* die."

The archetypal loss is the loss of paradise—but Benton College is a paradise in the form of a cliché, the Idea of the Idea of heaven:

> In Spring the air was full of apple blossoms and Benton was like—like Spring everywhere, but more so, far, far more so; in Winter the air was full of snowflakes, the red-cheeked

David Guaspari is a mathematician and computer scientist in Ithaca, N.Y.

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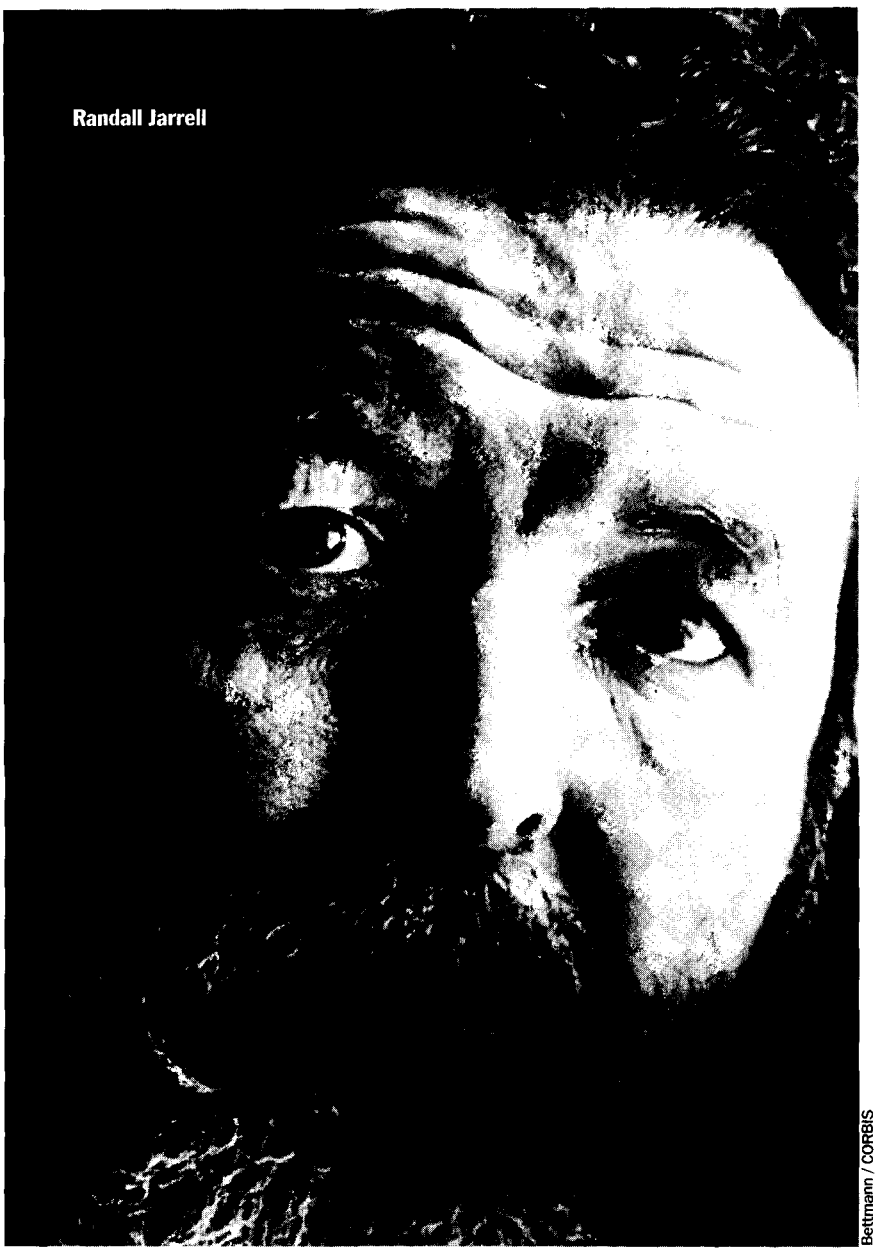
snow-booted girls stood knee-deep in their pedestals of snow, and the frost-crystals of their window panes were not frost-crystals at all but cut-outs, of Matisse's last period, that had been scissored from the unused wedding dress of Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolate; in Autumn all Benton was burning, and the students walked under the branches of fire—how was it that they walked among the flames, and were not consumed?—and picked the apples the blossoms had grown into, and threw the cores on the tennis courts where Yin and Yang [the President's dogs] and the Rosenbaums' blue Persian played with them.

The prose is, typically, determined to err on the side of excess, with flourishes that can amuse even those of us forced to look them up. (In Le Morte d'Arthur Elaine dies for love of Lancelot.) And Jarrell the poet gives his catalogue a meaningful form: The seasons run backward, from spring to winter to fall; and, with time's arrow thus uncertain, apples might well precede the blossoms they grew from. Temporal and causal succession have no place in a paradise—even a comical one in which the animals with true gravitas are pets. (It's they, after all, who play with the girls.)

The passage is also seductive, provoking nostalgia for experiences the reader is unlikely to have had but might have wished for. Gottfried's sardonic references to the supposed epoch in which "the state has withered away" will remind us that paradise on earth is always an illusion, and rarely amusing. The charm of Benton, though not sinister, is suspect. Benton offers "second childhood. It had sloughed off the awful protean burden of the past: of Magdelanian caves and Patmos and palm-leaf scriptures from Ceylon; of exiles' letters from Thrace or the banks of the Danube . . . So, most of their burden flung off, the people of Benton went light and refreshed upon their way."

Pictures is filled with images of childhood and age, innocence and the Fall. It appropriately begins with Constance Morgan, who could qualify as a fairy tale heroine of the genus Neglected Stepchild. At an early age Constance lost not only her parents and grandparents but also (a Grimm touch) her twin sister. She has recently graduated from "a plain old-fashioned college" and become an assistant to President Robbins's secretary. To *tout* Benton, Constance is "of no importance." But Gottfried and his wife Irene know her value. So does the narrator, an unnamed faculty member difficult to distinguish from Jarrell himself—an Auden-loving, tennis-playing poet; a Germanophile steeped in painting and music; witty and married to a witty wife.

And "this was her last day"—her last, that is, as the president's assistant. It is the day on which the book proper will also end; and on it Constance will be born—by acquiring parents. She will become the secretary to her beloved Gottfried Rosenbaum. The richly cultured Gottfried (an Austrian-born composer) and Irene (a Russian-born singer) have not sloughed off the burden of the past, and they bear its marks. Gottfried greets his fellow man with a mix of good humor and Olympian detachment that amounts to a judgment on the human race: He could accept anyone because his expectations were so low that everybody met them. The Rosenbaums can open the


Randall Jarrell

Bettmann / CORBIS

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world to Constance, as unburdened Benton never could have.

Her last day is, therefore, her first day, and its double nature underscores her (and our) final end. The narrator permits himself to wish that young and beautiful Constance, whom he's known all her life, might be suspended in her present state of becoming. He recalls her father saying that Constance didn't want to grow up—at which he himself had wondered why she had to.

Is the thought, or wish, that Constance need not grow up merely sentimental? The charge of sentimentality has been leveled at Jarrell's poetry, the accusation of yearning for an imaginary and idealized childhood. In *Pictures*, however, childhood and its usual associations—such as innocence and fairy tales—play a complicated role.

Fairy tales are not Disneyfied but dark: Constance, trying to learn German from an edition of Grimm's tales, works haltingly through the story of a woman who longs for a child, only to die of joy when she finally bears one. The innocence of the earnest social-improver Flo (who "live[d] before Original Sin") is not a virtue but a limitation. Childishness is the core of President Robbins's amorality. He remains in middle age a boy wonder, recognizably the Olympic diver he had once been, though regretting that years spent on his athletic career had allowed others a head start in the race to be called wondrous: "He possessed, and would possess until he died, youth's one elixir, Ignorance. . . . If you had said to people, 'Dwight Robbins was thirty-four when he was appointed President of Benton,' they would have said to you, 'You mean he's *thirty-four!*'"

Why, then, is the narrator's wish for Constance a blessing? One hint comes from Constance: She thinks of Gottfried as a child. Gottfried pretends, for example, to believe that all Americans eat pemmican and hunt buffalo—by which he recalls and savors the boyhood pleasures of reading westerns. That loyalty to childhood's joys was the source and subject of some of Jarrell's best poems. (One is called *The Lost World*.)

The great divide in *Pictures* lies between those who cherish the actual—children in the praiseworthy sense—and those who have confined themselves within worlds of their own imagining. Gottfried's respect for actuality extends to everyday social forms and duties. He has, after all, experienced what men stripped of society and tradition are like. Ponderous and heavyset, he negotiates the awkward travel connections necessary to attend the funeral of Miss Batterson, a former faculty member whom President Robbins had gladly turned out to pasture—while the president himself could manage no more than an expression of "grief in its Instant or powdered form."

Benton's relentless, progressive universalism has made it provincial—a Potemkin world inhabited by its builders, who believe it not just real but the measure of all things. Gottfried sums up their accomplishment in a parable: "The Patagonians have two poets, the better named Gomez; the Patagonians call Shakespeare the English Gomez."

The rule-proving exception is Gertrude Johnson. She, a visiting novelist, is *in* Benton but not *of* it. Fiercely witty Gertrude is a pro. Her take on every character—speech and manners, furniture and dress—is that of an entomologist sketching a specimen pinned to the board. Gertrude's novels are beautifully made but will never be first-rate because "[she] saw the worst; it was, indeed, her only principle of explanation." An inverse to Gottfried, Gertrude demands much of others and uses contempt for their failures to fuel her work. She is a frighteningly clever adolescent who lives not in Benton's ersatz utopia but in Hobbes's State of Nature. Wanting, like all adolescents, to see through the world, Gertrude projects onto it a crude and convenient determinism: "The same water runs a prayer-wheel and a turbine. But to Gertrude this proved that a prayer-wheel is a turbine."

And yet, one can't help feeling grateful for, can't help seeing the Leibnizian necessity of, someone who could thus sum up President Robbins's welcoming address to the incoming freshman class. "You had to hear it not to believe it." Malice so stylish is a pleasure, if a guilty one. "After a few minutes with Gertrude you wanted to be good all day every day."

Gertrude and the narrator are twinned: writers, old acquaintances, childless, out of place at Benton, and gestating books about it. Gertrude had feared she might have blundered by accepting the job, until she met the president, looked around, and realized: The place is a gold mine. She had found her next novel. If *Pictures* itself were a novel, Gertrude's secret writing project would make something happen. It doesn't, beyond her occasional chats with the narrator about fiction. (They implicitly point out flaws in the book we're reading, such as the absence of plot and the presence of characters too gorgeously true to type. They might also have noted gross violations of the conventions of first-person narration—accounts of scenes the narrator could not have known about.)

Those parallels sharpen the contrasts: the novelist vs. the poet; the tone-deaf vs. the musical adept; the Gertrude who "did not know—or rather did not believe—what it was like to be a human being" vs. . . . a being whose moral superiority is left unstated but clearly implied.

Many readers find the narrator smug; and his obvious identification with Jarrell makes that especially off-putting. He repeatedly genuflects to the superior gifts of Gottfried Rosenbaum, but that can be dismissed as a gambit, since admiration of Gottfried is itself a sign of moral worth. The narrator, of course, is not a character but a device—an entertainer who disdains the machinery of dramatic movement and dares us not to be charmed by his voice. And that voice is constantly, bossily in charge, confidently judging all things. Even readers who have not taken the moral holiday of judging that all judgment is bad may need an occasional breather. *Pictures* bears us along, if it does, by its sheer zest and because its judg-

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ments do, after all, side with the angels.

Anyone who lives in a college town, or among some other group of self-denominated intellectuals, will recognize president Robbins and his snobbish wife, or Flo Whittaker and her pedantic husband. *Pictures*, however, directs our attention not toward the squabbles and intrigues of academic life but at what its characters see when they look at the world. It judges them by what they love.

The "progressives" of Benton (better to call them prelapsarians) embrace everything new in art and thought and politics, but their world is changeless. (The novel's stasis, an aesthetic flaw, is in that regard true to its subject.) The President is forever boyish, Flo Whittaker ceaselessly *concerned*:

> Almost everything that happened to Flo and her family and friends was, after all, only private; and to her real life was public, what you voted at or gave for or read about in the *Nation*. Life seemed to Flo so petty, compared to real life. The trouble with women, people say, is that they take everything personally; Flo took nothing personally.

In Paradise nothing happens and the merely actual—the imperfect and unperfectible given, the passing thing that must be loved before it's lost—is of no importance.

"And so the last day came, and the last hour of the last day." The final chapter opens with this quasi-biblical incantation and makes of "last day" a refrain. The chapter's title, "They All Go," is odd since, in "They," the narrator includes himself. He has resigned to take a better job. Gertrude is leaving to finish her book, which will be quite different from the one we have just read. Constance will travel with the Rosenbaums, and by summer's end will have "transcended" Benton. The Whittakers will drag their long-suffering children around the country on an educational auto tour. And some foundation is sending President Robbins to make a Survey of Progressive Elements in European Education.

All endings are sad and all mean loss, a prospect reminding us that people are often better in practice than in theory. Gertrude dotes on Sidney, her rabbity third husband, who seems a blank to everyone else. Flo is ludicrous, but also selfless and kind. Her husband Jerrold, though a deadly pedant, is one of those rare people whose mind can be changed by an argument. Something about these absurd figures can be missed.

Missing from the list of persons to be missed is President Robbins. He may go, but he can't leave. When his campus empties, he mounts the swimming pool tower and launches himself into a swan dive. We last see him at the apex of his arc, the time-defying image of an athlete preserved at a moment of perfection—suspended, beautiful, "hung . . . upon the Wheel of Things." So maybe, after all, something about the president may, at some safely future date, be mourned—something of beauty, if not truth.

And after the last day, an elegiac coda: The narrator, on the way to clear out his office, is diverted by the sculptress in residence, who calls to him from her studio. He has always patronized this woman as being what she looks like, a bug he might set upon a leaf and shoo away. She has given no reason to think otherwise: To follow her technical talk "you would have had to be a welder," and to follow her philosophy and aesthetics "you would have had to be an imbecile." She now has something to show him, a brand new work, an anthropomorphized image of the East Wind. It is beautiful and moving, and she seems as stunned by this achievement as he. He has misjudged her. Has he misjudged Benton, too?

He will soon be gone, and rightly so, but will stay deeply loyal to moments, like this one, of inexplicable joy. ♦

Prelude to War

Did Texas statehood lead to Southern secession?

BY WILLIAM MURCHISON

So it was us after all—us Texicans—who, clamoring for admission to the Union during those first heady years of freedom and independence, helped set in train the events that tore the Union apart not long afterwards. If only someone had warned us!

Storm Over Texas
The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War
by Joel H. Silbey
Oxford, 230 pp., $28

On the other hand, what if someone had? What if the political leadership of the day had guessed at the violence and intensity of the storm that Joel Silbey sees as springing from passions loosed by the quest to annex Texas? Might the politicians, from Presidents John Tyler and James K. Polk on down, have approached the annexation enterprise with greater care and unction? Would they have approached it at all?

We'll never know, for all that Silbey, a political historian at Cornell, glimpses in the Texas controversy is signs and portents of awfulness.

To gratify the South, northern Democrats went along with annexation, at severe cost to the general harmony that the political parties of the time maintained in their own ranks. Henceforth, sectionalism, fed by the South's insistence on preserving and extending slavery, drove the wagon. Nor could prudent leaders apply the brake when necessary.

William Murchison is the Radford distinguished professor of journalism at Baylor.

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The annexation of Texas, in Silbey's telling, made an end to "evasion and compromise" on slavery. Subsequently, the South took over the Democratic party; antislavery, or just anti-Democratic, sentiment drained into the new Republican party. Then came the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the South's discovery that the game was up.

Such is Silbey's thesis. "Texas," as he sees it, "unleashed demons that, while restrained and apparently put back into the bottle after a short period, were never completely repressed." In the turbulent 1850s, as the nation veered toward breakup, "memories of Texas infused what subsequently happened with certain fears, outlooks that approached the edge of paranoia, and deeplyheld understandings about how the political process was being misused. At such moments, Texas became a benchmark against which to measure and assess the nature and direction of the events coming before the American people."

Bettmann / Corbis

The Battle of the Alamo, 1836

The South (as northerners saw it) was on its high horse, threatening to ride down all opposition to its aims.

There's something there, all right. I'm not certain it's as much as Silbey thinks. Historians exhibit a tendency to construct explanatory frameworks larger than necessary for immediate purposes. You can see why: Events, unless culled and collated, are just events; the historian pulls events together and explains What It All Means. Silbey is a good explainer, if hardly a riveting writer. But he leaves stuff out.

Grant, by all means, the tensions that Texas annexation brought to the surface of American politics. Still, you have to ask: Was Texas *not* going to be annexed? Was it going to lie baking there in the sun for the British to pick off, or the Mexicans to reconquer? Not for a New York minute. It was going to become part of the United States because that was what most Americans wanted and, equally to the point, because "their people are our people," in the succinct formulation of a Virginia congressman. Freed from Mexican oppression by the guts and marksmanship of Americans, Texas had no purpose, no *raison d'etre*, other than union with the United States of America. I find in Silbey's text entirely too few intimations of this important reality.

And, yes, the admission of Texas to the Union did, in some ways, worsen relationships between slave and free states. But outside Silbey's explanatory framework lies the point—unspoken, unmentioned—that there wasn't any getting around this slavery question, Texas or no Texas. America, as Lincoln would express the matter, paraphrasing Jesus Christ himself, was a house divided against itself, liable to topple over without prior notice to the tenants. It's possible to see the annexation controversy as having hastened that collapse; it's safer, perhaps, not to stress the point unduly.

Let's be grateful to Joel Silbey all the same for deftly reminding us that political dysfunction didn't originate during the Clinton and Bush administrations. There was a ferocity—indeed, a loopiness—to the debates of the 1840s and '50s that will seem alarmingly familiar to moderns. Slave states, free states, red states, blue states: You wonder sometimes, Don't Americans like each other?

Not the least encouraging lesson from these mid-19th-century brouhahas is that we could go at each other with hammer and tongs, and yet somehow eventually patch things up. One may only hope that highly prized knack hasn't been lost in the family attic. ♦

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"My goodness—is it Fall pledge-drive season already?"

Books in Brief

***First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong* by James R. Hansen (Simon and Schuster, 784 pp., $30).** Regarding the space race, conservatives should be as angry as the left about American involvement in Vietnam. Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon signalled that the United States, reeling from Sputnik, Yuri Gagarin, and chimps in space suits bearing the American flag, had won the space race. But the controversy over Vietnam and the far left dissent it had unleashed in the United States was taking shark bites out of this glorious, Cold War victory.

In the beginnings of the space race, the Kennedy administration was countering Soviet achievements with talk of launching the "first free man" into space. Government officials and citizens were denouncing Yuri Gagarin's statement from the capsule, "I see no God from here." But by the time of Armstrong's walk, the sixties couldn't be kept out.

A debate raged over whether the American or U.N. flag should be planted. NASA feared lawsuits from atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair if God were mentioned from the moon. From Tom Wolfe's fearless single combat warriors beating the Soviets without risking nuclear war, astronauts were now forced into an apolitical mold of internationalism and secularism.

James R. Hansen's authorized biography adheres to this mold. Although the Cold War is mentioned, there is no political celebration of America being first. The Soviets are merely competing technocrats, as if the worst they could do to the United States were develop a better slide rule. The competing pilot camps portrayed by Tom Wolfe in *The Right Stuff*, astronaut/civilian/scientist types versus the military, seat-of-the-pants barnstormers, is the only hint of conflict allowed in this book, and it is not hard to see where Hansen plops down. Chuck Yeager is portrayed as suffering from selective memory loss regarding his relationship with the more engineering-minded Armstrong.

Everything in *First Man* boils down to a technical problem to be solved—no symbolism, and certainly no flag-waving, even in zero gravity areas, is allowed. Ronald Reagan features in the index but only in the context of the technical glitch that was the *Challenger* episode. Khrushchev, on the other hand, the Soviet dictator who promised to bury us in space as well as on earth, is not even listed.

The Korean conflict is portrayed with no mention of the geopolitics involved (odd, since that too was a technical problem of a potentially lethal kind); instead, the only criticism or opinion ventured is the lack of information given to the pilots for the mission.

The more earthbound have always critiqued the astronauts' comments from space as having no literary or academic quality, betraying their scientific, empirical background. But that is to be forgiven when the job at hand is to get back home without burning up in reentry. Hansen, on the other hand, has no excuse.

Those wishing for a purely scientific book will not be disappointed by Hansen's book. He is able to take the reader into the labs and various tests. But for all his attempts to keep context out, it nevertheless plays a behind-the-scenes role. Instead of a national celebration of capitalist brawn, *First Man* takes cautious steps not to offend, in the best politically correct manner. And in this, Hansen does not do justice to his subject, whose step on the moon was anything but cautious.

—Ron Capshaw

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Parody

THE Stalin Wit

Edited by Bill Adler

"How we could use his earthy humour and gentle whimsy in these troubled times!" —*The Guardian*

"Ça fait rire, ça fait pleurer—mais surtout ça fait rire!" —*L'Humanité*

"We have been instructed to declare this to be a laugh riot and essential reading for all progressive peoples!" —*The Nation*

A Lethal Samovar

The meeting of the Politburo to decide the production quotas for the second Five-Year Plan had been going on for hours, and as the clock struck midnight, tempers began to fray. Finally, Ludmilla Likwidskaya, a senior member of the Supreme Soviet from the Chaicaramba Autonomous Region, turned to the First Citizen of the USSR and exclaimed, in an exasperated tone, "Comrade Stalin, if you were my husband, I would poison your coffee!"

To which the Supreme Commander of the Great Patriotic War replied, "And if I were your husband, Comrade Likwidskaya, I would—oh, the hell with it," and had her escorted from the conference room and shot!

The 'Svetlana' Speech

Winding up his welcoming address to the Plenary Session of the Twelfth International, Marshal Stalin leaned forward onto the lectern, an unmistakable twinkle in his eye.

"These Trotskyists," he declared, "are not content with attacks upon me, or on my wife, or on my sons. No, not content with that. They now include my little daughter Svetlana.

"Now, I don't resent these attacks. And my wife doesn't resent these attacks. And my sons don't resent these attacks. (Pause) But Svetlana does resent them. So I had a Mexican Party member insinuate himself into Trotsky's household, and when the moment was right, he drove an icepick into his brain!" (Laughter)

Three Little Words

During a gala dinner to celebrate the utter destruction of a Fascist uprising in liberated Prague, Comrade Stalin found himself seated next to Madame Frugalchev, the vivacious wife of the manager of the Pushkin Piston plant near Nizhny Novgorod.

Everyone knew that the Marshal of the Soviet Union preferred to be at his desk in the Kremlin planning new triumphs for Soviet industry and agriculture instead of making small talk at social occasions, and he was looking particularly taciturn.

His tablemate turned to him and said, "Dear Comrade Stalin, I have made a bet with my friends that I can make you say three words to me this evening."

"You lose," replied the great Stalin, whereupon Madame Frugalchev was dragged from the table, briefly tortured, and shot!

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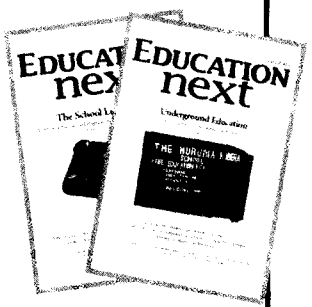

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In th[illegible]

"Acting [illegible]

The social price paid by the [illegible] minority students

"Acting white" was once a label used by scholars to characterize academically inclined, but allegedly snobbish, minority students who were shunned by their peers. Now that it has entered the national consciousness—perhaps even its conscience—the term has become a slippery, contentious phrase whose meaning is open to many interpretations. What I mean by acting white is a set of social interactions in which minority adolescents who get good grades in school enjoy less social popularity among their same-race peers than white students who do equally well academically. For the small percentage of black and Hispanic students who attend private school, however, I find no evidence of a trade-off between popularity and achievement. Most studies of academic achievement find little or no benefit of attending a private school for whites but quite large benefits for African Americans. It may be that blacks attending private schools have quite a different peer group.

—Roland G. Fryer

Advanced Placement Turns Fifty

An elite program designed in anticipation of cold war needs

The idea for the Advanced Placement (AP) exam emerged from elite colleges, prep schools, and high schools as a way of accelerating and fortifying the education of the nation's future leaders in anticipation of cold war national-security demands. A half-century later, the cold war over, the AP program is still with us. The essentials remain the same: high-school students take college-level courses, taught by teachers in their schools, and then take exams designed by the College Board to show they have mastered the subject at college-level proficiency. But despite the vast expansion of the number of students taking AP courses and exams since 1956, it is still the case that less than 10 percent of all those entering high school ever pass an AP examination.

—Andrew Mollison

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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